

40th
Edition ■ April, 1998

PATTERNS



The Glassblower

snow white walls reflect winter sun
ice blue waters curve twice blessed
in translucent waves lifting unlit tapers
to mirror twin lavender holders
in classic symmetry balancing and mantle
showplace where brass time capsule and glass
in luminous free forms blown into beauty
rest -- a rhapsody of music and poetry
crystallized by inspired breath
drawn through intensity of fire
spun with loving care shaping
molten glass into designs that cool
illuminating qualities of divine light

like a man's life shaped by blowing winds
turned through free flowing spirit
spun with intense passion of desire
creates from flesh a living light
that recalls kaleidoscopic seasons
wheeling insight during winter's austerity
as moving twilight forms cast long
lavender shadows upon white walls
of disappearing day with the simplicity
shown by a single candle reaching royally
beyond daffodils fading to yellow dust
as passionate red tulips kiss good night.

For my friend, Patrick Bourke, 1932-1998
Dean, Arts, Letters and Sciences
-Susanna Mason Defever
February 14, 1998



PATTERNS

*40th
Edition*

A PUBLICATION OF
ST. CLAIR COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
PORT HURON, MICHIGAN

Preface

Last year we celebrated change and irreverence. This year we're celebrating stability and tradition. Forty years of continuous publication, and you'd think we'd have settled this.

Thank goodness we haven't. Without the contradictions, without the frictions, there would be no art. So it is appropriate that we wallow in our paradoxes, that we should celebrate our heritage as we veer in new directions.

Through these forty years, though, there are the continuous threads of creativity and quality that run through Patterns. Ample evidence lies within, for we've invited past winners to publish their stories, essays, and poems once again in these pages. Their works mark not only their continuing excellence, but a link between the past and the present.

But this wouldn't be Patterns if we weren't introducing you to our new writers and artists, so here they are, too. Their work, like the work of their predecessors, provokes, pokes, sifts, and uplifts.

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Acknowledgments

There is no *Patterns* without the writers and artists, those published and unpublished, who brave self-doubt and submit their works for our consideration. We must thank them first.

Patterns has long been valued as a forum for emerging artists and writers at this College, and so we are grateful to the administration of St. Clair County Community College for its support. No mention of thanks would be complete, however, without mention of the Friends of the Arts. Were it not for this organization, there would likely be no *Patterns* at all, and so we express our deep appreciation for their continuing and unwavering support.

Last year we employed judges from outside the College to decide the merits of our students' entries. The result was outstanding: a new perspective inside the magazine to reflect our magazine's bold new look. Once again we have judges willing to share their time and expertise so that *Patterns* reflects a variety of voices.

First, we wish to thank **Susan Ager** of the *Detroit Free Press*, who endured hand surgery as well as our many phone calls with good cheer. Her willingness to help is all the more generous when considering her busy schedule: in addition to writing a column three times a week, Ms. Ager has recently authored *At Heart*, a collection of her best columns, and has led writing seminars at newspapers throughout the country. *Patterns* is a better magazine for her help.

We are also grateful to award winning children's author **Richard Paul** for lending his time and attention to the myriad of poems, essays, and stories students submitted. Despite the press of commitments - Mr. Paul is working on a second children's book, and is a professional speaker and ventriloquist - he was always gracious and positive. We feel fortunate to have made his acquaintance, even if only via telephone.

Thanks are in order for **Anne Tompert**, who is also a writer of children's books. Her publishing credits are many, including an autobiography of a Marine City pioneer and the ALA Notable Children's Book, *Little Fox Goes to the End of the World*. Her assistance to us was invaluable, and her ties to our area fill us with pride.

Finally, there is **Gerry LaFemina**. On top of teaching too many classes, he has a new book of poems out, entitled *Shattered Hours*, he's the editor of *Controlled Burn*, a national literary magazine, and he runs a poetry reading series also entitled *Controlled Burn*. How he managed to find the time to help judge *Patterns* we don't know, though we suspect his incredible energy and his devotion to the cause of literature helped. Thank you, Gerry - for your time, your passion, and your friendship.

The Richard J. Colwell Award

During the first week of classes Rachel Ward took a risk. She said, in front of the class, that she wanted to be A Writer, and she wanted to know what she had to do to accomplish this. This was daring; even in a creative writing class most of us are unwilling to admit that we aspire to such heights.

That willingness to risk is also evident in Rachel's short story, "Murder Revised." Richard Colwell would have adored Rachel's story, with its twists and its playfulness in writing about writing. This kind of derring-do is the basis of the Colwell Award, named after Richard Colwell, a wonderful instructor at St. Clair County Community College for many years. Such was his impact that several of our past *Patterns* winners mentioned his influence in their letters to us. He encouraged risk-taking and preached determination.

Rachel has that essential quality of determination as well. If you don't plug away, if you don't keep at it, you won't be creative, and you certainly take no risks. But Rachel works at her craft; as a colleague in her creative writing class noted (enviously), Rachel writes a lot. And she writes well, as evidenced by her choice as this year's Richard J. Colwell Innovative Short Story Award winner.

So, what do you have to do to become A Writer? You write out of habit, not only out of inspiration. You take chances with your work. You look for audiences; you submit your work to magazines (another risk).

Is Rachel Ward A Writer? It would seem to be so. Congratulations, Rachel.

The Blanche Redman Poetry Award

We give great credence to writing as an imaginative act, and in doing so we sometimes ignore the power of the writer's personality to shape her work. Often, the critic hides the author behind the (fictive) narrator, pretending it's all imagination, all of it made up in the waking dreams we call writing.

But to read "Evening Song," with its quiet power, is to know much of Laura Tollefson, this year's winner of the Blanche Redman Poetry Award. The gentle rhythm, as in the poem's last line, echoes Laura's own gentle demeanor. Her delight in nature is found in the poem's imagery; its uplifting tone is that of Laura's own life. There is power, here, too, in the unusual structure of this prose-poem; though Laura is quiet she is strong. The imaginative act in this poem involves the weaving together of structure, tone, imagery, and rhythm.

The ability to weave these elements in an original manner was greatly admired by Blanche Redman, founder of *Patterns* and herself an accomplished poet. She encouraged her students to employ original structures, to search for a poem's rhythms, to invoke the right tone, and to create powerful imagery. Thus the Blanche Redman Poetry Award is given to the poet who shows striking originality in blending these elements. "Evening Song" evinces these qualities, as does the writer and this year's Redman Award winner, Laura Tollefson. Congratulations.

The Eleanor B. Mathews Writing Award

When I am too sad and too skinny to keep keeping, when I am a tiny thing against so many bricks, then it is I look at trees. When there is nothing left to look at on this street. Four who grew despite concrete. Four who reach and do not forget to reach. Four whose only reason in to be and be.

"Four skinny Trees,"
The House on Mango Street,
Sandra Cisneros

The four works by this year's Eleanor B. Mathews recipient, Christine O'Connor, reach and do not forget to reach. Each piece reflects unique intensity and voice with themes connecting emotion, place and person. The moments of pain and happiness conveyed in her poetry, short story and essay tell us a particular kind of truth about ourselves and our growth as human beings. What readers take away from Christine's work is the rare gift of understanding space: the short distance between ourselves and our loved ones as we walk away, measured by how far it seems to try and find our way home.

Christine O'Connor plans to earn her Associate in Arts degree and hopes to continue her studies at the University of Michigan. While her relaxed presence and keen observations will be missed in our classrooms after Christine O'Connor moves on, her words that reach and do not forget to reach will remain here.

■ Essay: Selection of Merit
■ Vickie Vande Voorde

Needles from The Past

Tuesday I found some Christmas tree needles as I was vacuuming the living room carpet. They have to be several years old. I know that because we've had artificial trees for the last three years. I consider what a poor housekeeper I am as I sit on the floor, searching for more needles. They're buried deep in the carpet, but I find quite a few. I rest my back against the wall and draw my knees up under my chin. Looking at the little pile of needles I contemplate life. I remember when

things were fresh and real like the tree that year. Life seemed easier then. We all liked each other. We enjoyed being with each other and seeing each other happy.

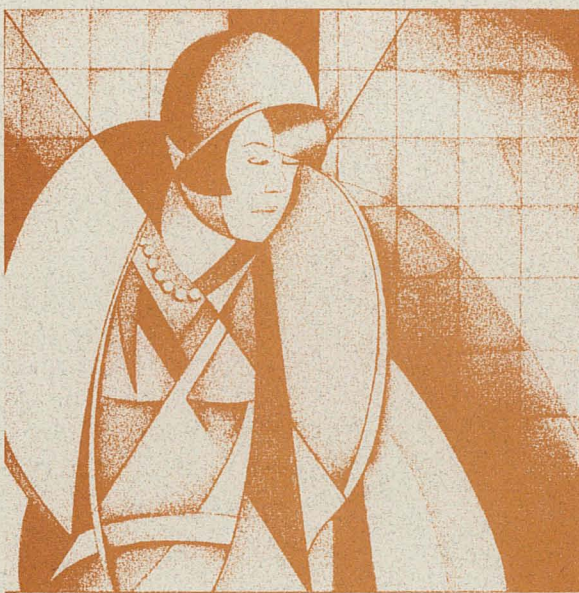
Was the artificial tree a turning point? Was that when we began to pretend things were fine? Was that when we started to put up a front to the world? See how nice my life is? See how well we get along? See how happy we all are?

I let the needles trickle through my fingers as I reminisce. Major memories came flooding back to me. It was all so simple then. Simple needs and simple lives. We were grateful for what we had. No drive or ambition to be someone else or somewhere else. Just ourselves, our family, complete.

But one day the artificialness took over. We became strangers in our own house. Each person had his own agenda and it didn't include the other. We died like the live green Christmas tree and the artificial tree was brought in to replace our real lives with synthetic material. Dust it off, clean it up, bring it out to show off for family and friends. Put it on display. If it looks good then it must be good.

Only if you lived there would you know it was fake. Only if you vacuumed up some old needles did you remember what once was; a living, breathing, vital family.

I took the needles out to the kitchen and found some tape. I taped the needles together in a little row as tears ran down my face. Then I taped the whole bunch of them to the window over the sink. I had to use this as a reminder of what once was and what could be again. It would take a lot of effort, but I resolved to work hard at it, to concentrate. Because after all, a real family, even more than a real tree, was better than the artificial variety and I could find the real family and bring them back together once again. Permanently.



Selection of Merit:
Flapper
Beverly Wallace

Alumni Poetry: Gina Tucker

Bloodroots

It is May
And I am.
Like the Sanguinarias -

Tap bleeding roots
In thawed soil
Among last autumn's leaves.

The new bees
Encompass my basal.
Too young to sting -

I wish I were.
Blond and pale
Beautiful...naive.

Then I too
Could climb to the sun -
Cling to the wind.

Never worry over
Loosestrife or
Thirty-two degrees.

Sleep warm below
Frozen ground - without a
Compass or sundial.

And in May
Through defrosted dirt
Arrive in sordid vanity.

■ Short Story: First Place Tie
■ Andre Bradley

Lesson Learned

After three years of marriage, times went hard. Jobs became scarce along with money and food. Only those with money ate more than one meal a day. The rest of us were lucky to feed our children one meal a day, leaving ourselves without for as long as we could stay alive.

Lorianne and I lucked out. We rationed our food for one meal a day and one meal for someone outside in the alley—but only one meal for one person. Lorianne comes to me one day after a fifteen-hour shift at the plant and tells me she has found a job. I ask her why. She says to help make ends meet. I ask her if it means anything to her that I slave fifteen hours every day so that she can eat a whole meal every day when many women are starving to death. She tries to say something, but I cut her off. I ask what more of me she required; that I sell my blood, my teeth, my soul. I ask what it is that she can't live without that I'm not already providing. She says nothing. I call her an ungrateful wretch. As things heated up, my vision went fuzzy and then black. A memory from childhood played before my eyes. It was like being in a movie house.

"No more excuses! I'm sick of them. You tell me a reason or shut up and take what's coming to you."

Mom must not have had a reason, because it was silent until we heard his skin collide with her skin. Her anguish was released in a short scream. After which we heard more 'collisions' but Mom held strong and didn't let out any more emotions.



Selection of Merit:
Egyptian Woman
Darin Magneson

When the beating was over, Daddy walked out of the room pulling up his pants. My brother and I couldn't figure out why he had to pull up his trousers and zip them up when he was done beating Mom, but we ignored that. We rushed in to see how Mom was doing.

Her eye was already swollen and changing colors. Today, she took the beating better than others. I guess she took strength from the fact that Jeffy and I didn't get this beating. It was only an accident. Jeffy hit the ball with the bat and I failed to catch it before it went through the window. Mom said it was her fault because she was pitching the ball. We didn't swallow that, but we bit

our tongues to save our hides. While I stood there looking at my mother bleeding from the cuts left by Dad's ornate wedding band, I wished that I had bit my tongue right off and fessed up. Each line on my mother's face left a scar on my heart. I'm surprised that I didn't bleed to death.

Life went on like that throughout my childhood. I always wanted to stop Daddy, but before I gathered the strength (and courage), Mom took the last beating she could. I know she is among the angels today for protecting us kids. Daddy was arrested and us kids put into state homes; separate state homes.

That is where we received what we should have taken before.

Through it all, I thought I learned to treat a lady like a bird with a broken wing—fragile. It was this kind of treatment that won the heart of every girl around me. I accepted the only one that stole mine return, Lorianne's. She was a pretty girl. Eyes deep brown, teeth linen white, and her hair a curly black. When I looked upon her face I saw my Mom, except her skin was a touch lighter in color.

Now, the movie ends and my sight returns. I hear crying. I look around and see that I am on top of Lorianne; her face is turned away. I get up and pull up my pants, intent on washing up. Before I can though, Lorianne turns her face in pain. I see my mother there in her face, as always, but this time I can see my mother, not Lorianne, crying, her heart breaking. I see the cuts on my wife's face for I am also a left-hander.

I quietly say I'm sorry and walk out of the room. I stop at the desk in the living room. I pull out a drawer and without even thinking about it, I grab a gun. I walk out of the house and into the alleyway. In a trance, I step over to the dumpster and climb in. I look to the sky and say, "God, please forgive me." I lift my hand and end my father's influence on me.

Poetry: Second Place Tie
Rachel Ward

Tripped

You
flitted through my field of vision
like a butterfly
and I tripped.
My footsteps interrupted,
the pattern I knew so well
lost
like leaves swirling through
a madcap crazy November wind.
I looked again,
and you were gone.
So I continued on,
one foot and then the other,
along the same monotonous path
I walked every day
but this time,
I was different.

- Essay: Selection of Merit
- Laura DuBois

Put Some LoTE Into Your Life

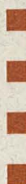
Imagine this, you have just graduated from high school and are going to register for your first semester at college. After selecting the following courses such as psychology, biology, and calculus, you become aware that one more class is needed to fill your schedule. What other class could you take in order to be more marketable when applying for a job?

As we approach the twenty-first century the ability to speak a foreign language is becoming a necessity (Garcia & Otheguy 114). Many times we are selfish Americans, thinking that everyone should be able to speak English. However, languages such as Spanish and Japanese are emerging very quickly (Lowe 3). Fluency in LOTE (languages other than English) is becoming very beneficial in careers today. The combination of a foreign language and almost any other skill is an excellent selling point and often increases the possibility of finding interesting employment (Bluford 25).

First we will focus on the business world, because it is growing every day. As ever more businesses expand or market their products abroad, there is an increasing need for people who are bilingual (Bluford 26). The knowledge of foreign languages has become so important that many of the companies provide language training at the firm's expense (Bluford 6). English alone cannot be used to negotiate a deal. Many countries are using their native tongues as a means of retaining their "cultural identities" (Lowe 4). For example, in France and Germany it is necessary to use the native language when conducting business. In a survey of 5,814 leading European executives, only 31 percent use English for professional purposes (Lowe 5). Foreign countries that speak English may insist that business be conducted in their language. How will we continue to serve customers whom we cannot communicate with? Banking and finance are also becoming more international. As companies expand all over the world, banking facilities must be prepared to deal with the new flow of business (Bluford 27). Therefore, a bilingual loan officer would be invaluable in a Spanish-speaking community.

In addition to jobs dealing with marketing and financing, tourism is a growing industry. People are traveling today more than ever before. There is an increasing need for flight attendants, hotel managers, switchboard operators and sightseeing guides. These are all jobs that will most often require an individual to be bilingual.

In addition to the previous jobs explained, translating, interpreting, as well as teaching require a more intensive study in the language. Translators and interpreters are required to



have a very high level of proficiency in the language they are translating from and the language they are translating into (Bluford 26). Frequently, translators and interpreters can speak three or more languages. Both occupations require an individual to think quickly. Teaching a language requires an extensive knowledge in the languages being used. Bilingual teachers not only help students learn another language, they increase English skills as well. This is one reason a person who decides to go into English should seriously consider taking a foreign language. The Federal Government is second only to educational institutions as an employer of individuals with foreign language skills (Bluford 28). Language related positions include the Department of Defense, the National Security Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Immigration and Naturalization service, and the Peace Corps (Bluford 28). Just think about how different our world would be if people holding high positions in our nation were bilingual!

In addition to people who hold high positions in our nation, medical professionals are also great occupations with which to combine the study of a language. Any individual who deals with emergency medicine needs to be able to communicate with the average person. Especially if one works in the southern part of the country, speaking Spanish will become a necessity in order to do a good job in his or her profession. Other jobs in the medical field that could benefit from speaking two languages are nurses, 911 dispatchers and paramedics.

From medicine to business, being bilingual will definitely improve your capabilities (Bluford 23). When an individual is able to speak the language of another country he or she will definitely profit from it. English may be the world's most spoken language, but people who are bilingual will definitely stand out in their chosen field. Being able to say a few words in another language may make the difference in a business deal or even saving a life.

Right now, you should be concerned with making sure that a foreign language is incorporated into your college schedule. Learning a foreign language and something about a foreign culture is an important step in becoming a citizen of the world. In addition to fulfilling a language requirement, you may find that you have also learned to perceive the world with greater understanding.

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No Longer Ringing

The voices, intermittent, building in ditches,
In banks of snow then melting
puddles, dried mud, tilting corn stalks
pointing the way. A way.

What language forms itself around
rough words like lips around the stone, smooth,
worn around the edges, turned on the tongue
before they are set down in a circle around us.
Together they are building the tower stone to stone
word to word separating what's been imagined
and all else. If there is an all else.
What makes it certain? What turns the light
thus what remains illuminated?

What remains shadowed? What
turns dull like the dry beat of the pavement oozing
open scores of landscape in a slow rain
and windshield wipers' intermittent rhythm?

The voices are disconnected...a phone no longer
ringing. Picture hung on the wall occasionally
glanced at. There is no dial tone. Rings. Faint
voices layered and detached and humming increments
inching forward grass across the pavement where
we once walked when the living who are never quite
alive and the dying never quite dead pass evenings
thumbing the pages of a Christmas catalogue
recording their wishes on white paper

and white paper as though wishes
happi equaled
yeah ness

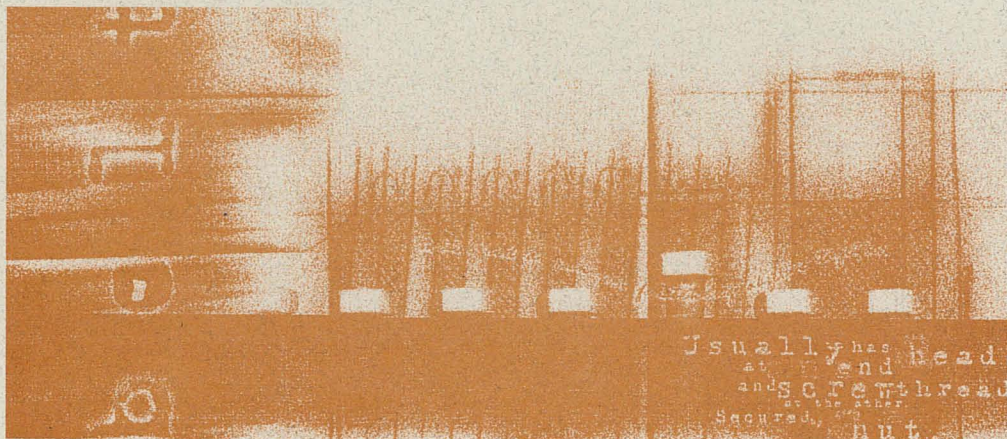
the balls of the rock star were never licked quite
this clean not as clean not as clean as the rosary
a game of ten pins or standing arm and arm imagining
remembering our clothes on the beach how bare
the soul hangs to the wind toward us sharp as a dull
blade spinning windmills over

over
the voices over and over and if each one found
new voice and if each one found and if each one
took to sun to moon to ocean to earth and spun
the vowels as long as strings of glass angels play
then these words have
value.

Poetry: First Place Tie
Rachel Ward

Pretend

"I have a secret,"
the younger sister said to the older.
"In the middle of the night,
when it is dark
and everyone is sleeping,
I get up
and dance like a princess,
and eat chocolate."
"Don't lie,"
said the older sister to the younger,
as she got up to adjust
the newspaper that filled the cracks
in the window.
"You have never had chocolate.
It costs money."
"I know.
But sometimes,
I like to pretend."



Second Place:
Bolt
M. Blanco

■ Essay: Second Place
■ Robin Cash-Larsen

Stripped

A fresh start, another turn, a second chance. A week ago I was married; again. Our wedding had been a display of American excess. No expense was spared. A party for our friends and family. A toast: "to us." Proof that we had everything and then some. That day we were everything that society said we should be: attractive, happy and prosperous.

This marriage would last.

■ Alumni Poetry:
■ Gerard Smith

Snap

While reading a magazine article at lunch
A line launched me into another place.
A suggestion of the quiet of a forest
Left me suddenly in a spot,
The "Hall of Pines," I think my dad called it.
My mind momentarily filled with the aspects of the place,
like a snow-globe in my head,
yet around me all the same.
The rush of wind in pine leaves.
The creak of swaying trunks and clatter of dueling branches.
The smell of green trees and mossy soil.
The spring of soft ground.
For one brief moment,
A split of a split second,
I was within the place that was within me,
and then it was gone.

What better way to demonstrate our level of commitment than spending an obscene amount of money on the ritual that would bind us together for the rest of our lives? It was the second time around for both of us; so we deserved to have it all, didn't we? This time we would live happily ever after. But deep inside, we knew we could never be sure, so we numbed our apprehension with the soothing, intoxication of extravagance.

Hung over from our excesses, we endured the long flight to our honeymoon destination. I had plenty of time to think about how superficial and spoiled I'd become. I had gotten almost everything I every wanted within two short years. Shouldn't I be happy? I had a

new house, new husband, new family, new friends. Somewhere along the way I had lost myself.

After thirty hours, we arrived at the international airport in Sydney, Australia. We boarded a small plane that would fly Eric and me a thousand miles north to Queensland.

A few hours later the plane circled its pre-landing pattern. We flew downward through tropical, mist enshrouded mountains. The early afternoon sun was still trying to burn through the haze above the rain forest canopy. Finally, we landed and disembarked under a hot sun and surprisingly cool breeze. I had a major case of jet lag. My watch was reading 11:00 p.m., July 1, but it was 3:00 p.m., July 2 in this little airport. We had flown one day into the future coming from the States. Nineteen hours of actual flight time, but thirty-four hours time difference.

It was funny to hear the cab driver complain about the chilly winter breeze when it was July. Almost everything was unfamiliar. The trees, grass, the smells, the language. I felt completely separated from everything I knew. It was liberating.

Later that evening, we were to meet our expedition guides. I wondered what they would be like. My instincts had led me to choose this trip for our honeymoon. Most of my friends thought I was crazy; especially when I couldn't explain why I wanted to submit to this kind of challenge on my honeymoon. It would not be the typical champagne and candle-light honeymoon that most people think of. But I felt compelled to do it. The trip was a seventy kilometer sea kayaking experience through the Great Barrier Reef area in the Coral Sea. I had my own sea kayak and enjoyed the sport, but had never paddled that kind of distance before. Maybe I wanted another challenge or maybe I wanted to find out what I was made of. I didn't analyze the compulsion; I just booked the trip.

We went out for drinks that night and had a get acquainted meeting with our expedition leaders and the rest of the group. The two guides who would be leading the trip were: Simon, from Hobart, Tasmania and Gary from Cairns, Australia. There were six other people from the States who would be part of our kayaking trip that would leave the next morning.

We were each given a small "dry" bag to pack our belongings for the week. I stared at the bag, wide eyes. Eric looked at me and laughed. I knew he was wondering how I was going to fit all of the stuff from my two huge suitcases into one small bag. Thankfully, he refrained from commenting.

Simon gave us an updated list of what to bring. Looking at the list, I became aware of the fact that I wore more clothing in a single day than what was on the pack list and was supposed to last me a week. I was beginning to wonder what I'd gotten myself into. I went back to the room to pack. I filled the bag with a pair of shorts, a pair of khaki bush pants, a long-sleeved shirt, a short-sleeved shirt, a swim suit, toothbrush, comb and a small journal.

Leaving my make-up, hair care products, and extensive wardrobe behind was torture. Those things were such a part of my identity, I wasn't sure if I knew who I was without all that stuff. The only indulgence I allowed myself was an old compact with a small mirror, a tube of mascara, and some moisturizer. My husband teased me about my contraband and said I was hopeless. I was packed and ready to go. Eric checked the remainder of my luggage with the hotel security. They would hold it until we got back.

We were up at 5:00 a.m. the next morning. I was still jet lagged and didn't know what day it was. I felt like I hadn't even slept. We loaded our gear in to a beat up Land Rover and left the small town of Cairns. It would be an all day drive over makeshift roads through the most beautiful and pristine jungle in Australia. It was such a special place because it's where the Daintree rain forest meets the reef. Kayaking the Great Barrier Reef, that was the reason I'd wanted to come; I wasn't completely sold on this "jungle business." Eric, my fearless husband saw it as an added bonus.

Our ultimate destination that evening was Cape Tribulation, an isolated section of beach with jungle to the west and the Coral Sea to the east. It was an unpopulated area for hundreds of square miles. No phones, electricity, plumbing, or roads. The only way out once we started was to paddle out.

Simon had driven like a maniac, taking hair pin turns on rutted, mountainous, jungle roads at breakneck speed. He only eased up when the pin from the trailer that held our kayaks broke and he had to stop and repair it. I stood over him

watching as he deftly repaired the bent trailer hitch and pin. I commented on how bad the roads were and wondered if we'd make it to the Daintree that night. He just laughed and told me we'd be fine, unless it started to rain; then we could just slide back down the way we came. I was too hot and tired to be more than slightly amused.

Bruised, battered and dusty, we arrived. After being bounced around the Land Rover like ping pong balls it felt good to stand on solid ground. It was about 6:00 p.m. and dark already. I was surprised, then remembered that this was their winter season. We grabbed flashlights and unloaded the gear. We all pitched in so it didn't take long. We each had our bag for personal stuff and then our camping gear. Simon told us to team up and then he led us into the interior to look for a suitable place to put up the tents. We precariously trudged through an overgrown trail and entered the Daintree Rain forest. Turning around for one last look, I watched the taillights of the Land Rover disappear from view as we moved in opposite directions.

Once we found a good spot, the tents were quickly pitched. The jungle with all its romance, mystery and enigmatic stories was not a peaceful place after dark. When Eric and I had camped in the past I had always been the reluctant assistant. I would only help him if there was no chance I would break a

nail. That first night in Daintree was surreal. I had never been so eager to set up camp in all my life. The tent was up and I was inside, safely zipped in my sleeping bag within fifteen minutes. I laid there trying to ignore my painfully full bladder and listened to a cacophony of screeching, chattering, howling sounds I had never heard before; in darkness so black that I couldn't see my hand in front of my face. I turned on the flashlight and looked for my journal. My compact fell out. I opened it and looked at myself. I was a mess. The absurdity of bringing a mirror out here suddenly became apparent to me. I closed it and shoved it deep into my bag. I pulled out my journal. I thought about the

new life I was starting. I wondered about myself. Would I be able to do this trip? Could I go the distance? Did I have any depth of character?

I had always suspected that I might be a high maintenance woman. I love fashion, change my hair color with the seasons, get a manicure every two weeks and spend more on beauty products than I do on groceries. I've always tried to rationalize



First Place:
Flower Child
Beverly Wallace

my indulgences by telling myself that it was all for a good cause—me. I swallowed the “I - me- want” message from the media; hook, line and sinker.

I was finding out that it really didn’t matter, none of it. All of the crap from fashion and beauty magazines was worthless if you needed to do more than “look good.” When you’re removed from the context of your society, the only thing that matters is who you are and what you’re capable of doing. In this wild place, being high maintenance was not a good thing. It was not a trip for “Barbie girls.” No one would care how good I looked or what kind of fashion sense I had if I couldn’t pull my own weight. I had to do it.

Sunrise at Cape Tribulation was spectacular. The ominous night noises were transformed by the dawn into whimsical chatter of birds greeting the sun. Through the tangled vines and brush I could see miles of deserted beach, golden in the early light. Our kayaks were laying at the water’s edge like beached sea creatures. High and dry, they waited to be loaded and returned to the water for which they were made.

The air was balmy and smelled like apricots, sweet and heavy. The ocean was crystalline, green and inviting. The waves were soft and rolled onto the sand as gently as a mother caresses her child. It was a poetic moment. One of many I would experience. It was a good day to be alive.

We ate a quick breakfast on the beach. Then I learned how to go to the bathroom when there isn’t one. It involved a shovel and a stroll in the jungle. Simon and Gary found my discomfiture over the “facilities” amusing. They told me that by the end of the week I would get used to it. I never did.

Eric and I took down the tent and packed up our gear. Everyone carried their stuff down the path to the beach where the boats waited. The kayaks were long tandems. They were designed in New Zealand for high performance in unpredictable seas. Each boat carried a primary load that was essential to the group, along with our personal bags and gear. Eric and I were responsible for the fresh water supply. We loaded about twenty-five gallons into the center hatch. Then we sealed it up to keep out the sea water. That supply had to last about three days. There was no source for fresh water until the jungle spring at Whale Bone Beach.

We were all loaded and ready to launch. Pushing the boats out, then climbing in was a team effort. We pitched in

■ Alumni Poetry:
■ Sarah Ropposch

Perhaps You Will Dream of Your Fish Existence

I was once a jellyfish
graceful in my bonelessness,
wandering through the
feathered beauty of
green sea life,
gliding over the sharps and flats
of elegant corals.
I drifted through
the sun-filtered days;
I felt no need for
any kind of company.
But then I spotted you...

You were once a shark;
you swam with beautiful ease;
your grace was in your power
and you commanded
the things around you,
taking what you felt to be yours.
Something deep and shapeless
moved inside me;
I wanted to stop gliding.
I wanted cartilage and teeth.
I wanted to transform myself
into something judiciously fierce.

Somewhere in shadow I waited.
Somewhere in brightness you surged,
coming out of the water to walk on two legs.
Perhaps someday you will dream
of your fish existence.
Perhaps someday you will recall
seeing a washed-up jelly
drying in the sun.

to help each other. Simon brought up the rear in his single person kayak.

Eric stood in waist deep water, gripping the bow, stabilizing it. I slipped into the rear cockpit. I was the steersman and would be controlling the rudder. I opted to leave my spray skirt in the hatch. Being swamped and rolling wasn't an immediate concern. Eric did his entry from the water, laying over the boat, then sliding into position, legs first. We were off.

I began paddling and found it more difficult that I had expected. This kayak was much bigger and heavier than the streamline Dagger *Apostle* I had at home. I had never paddled a "trip loaded" boat before, either. We had two hundred pounds, just in water weight, not to mention our gear and the weight of the boat. That extra weight made a big difference. Shortly after starting, the muscles in my shoulder and back screamed for me to stop.

Once we got the kayak up to speed it was easier to maintain a pace. After the first three kilometers my deltoids were burning. I used Lamaze techniques to keep my mind off the pain from my cramping muscles. I started to doubt myself. I paused and let Eric continue the pace alone, though he didn't know it. I grabbed my water bottle from the deck bag in front of me and drank deeply. Replacing the bottle I did some stretches for my back and shoulders. Then Eric became aware of the increased work load and wanted to know what was going on. Not wanting to appear weak; I kept paddling and told him that I was fine.

A few hours later, we maneuvered our way around exposed sections of the reef to enter a quiet lagoon. We beached the boats and had some veggie sandwiches for lunch. We ate hunched over charts and maps plotting the course to the next campsite at Weary Bay. We had to travel fifteen more kilometers. I had serious doubts about making it there. I had the will, but would my body obey me?

My skin was starting to fry and I had lost three nails from my fifty dollar manicure. I decided the best way to bolster my sagging morale would be to take a swim. Snorkeling around the warm, shallow waters of the lagoon with the blue and green spotted sting rays and mellow sea turtles did the trick. I was rejuvenated and ready to go.

Simon and Gary called everyone together for a brief strategy session for the next leg of the trip. The wind was starting to pick up. It was blowing about twenty knots. I noticed outside the lagoon the seas were starting to rise. The tide was coming in, so we quickly packed up the lunch stuff and launched. This time we put the spray skirts on and sealed ourselves into the kayaks.

We got the boat up to speed quickly and exited the lagoon. We were slammed with the big, south wind right away. It whipped my hair around my head in a Medusa-like fashion. The swells were three to four feet, rolling south to north. We took the first wave broad side. It washed over the deck and swamped the lower end of the kayak, Eric's end. I was higher in the back, riding the top of the next wave.

It didn't take too long for me to straighten the boat out and get us pointed to the correct heading. We braced with the paddles a couple of times to keep from capsizing. Eric could do an "Eskimo Roll" in a single kayak and I could only do one

if I was assisted. But rolls were almost impossible to execute in a tandem boat with such a heavy load. We had never practiced a tandem roll. We agreed that if we went over, we would do a wet exit, right the boat and re-enter. Even in building seas, it would be the safest thing to do. At least the water was warm and the sun was shining. That decreased the fear factor considerably.

The wind continued to blow, increasing to twenty-five knots. The waves were getting bigger and cresting. I watched the others disappear in the troughs then rise up again. The tranquil, albeit painful paddle of the morning was gone. I had no time to think about pain now. Keeping the kayak in a position where we could surf the waves and use them to our advantage took all of my concentration. We were constantly doing braces with the paddles to keep ourselves upright. There were two choices: stay on top of the waves and ride them or let the waves crest then break over us and the boat. In three hours we surfed into Weary Bay making the only upright landing of the group (except for Simon). We made great time thanks to the twenty-five knot tail wind.

We set up camp. It was another perfect place. This beach was flanked by black, basalt cliffs and boulders. The cliffs rose hundreds of feet with the rain forest beyond the beach. We chose a fairly flat spot close to the beach, away from the jungle and its forthcoming night noise.

I collapsed in the tent. Everything hurt. My knees and heels were bruised and blistered from gripping the inside of the kayak. I was sunburned, windburned, my lips were cracked, almost all of my nails had fallen off and my hair could break a rake. I sat up and pulled off my remaining fake nails. I put them inside the compact I'd brought. By *Vogue* magazine standards; I was devolving. It didn't seem to bother me that much. I felt so good about the distance we had covered, my endorphins must have been flowing. I felt exhausted, but strong and capable. That made me feel confident and sexy.

I tried to put myself into some semblance of order; after all, this was my honeymoon. As gently as I could, I pulled the comb through my hair, trying to smooth the salt encrusted mess. It felt like a can of Coke had been dumped over my head then dried in the sun. The dried salt on my skin felt gross, too.

I was tempted to rinse off in my drinking water, but I knew I'd regret it tomorrow if I did. So instead, I pulled the drawstring from the strap of my water bottle and wound it around my hair, making a pony tail. Then I pulled the moisturizer from my bag and smoothed it over my traumatized skin. It took away that sticky feeling. I felt renewed. I put on my swimsuit top and my bush pants. Then I went to find my husband.

I started walking the beach. Looking at the cliffs ahead, I saw Eric. He was standing at the top, looking out over the

■ Poetry:
■ Selection of Merit
Jeremy Moore

We Collected Leaves of Gold

We collected leaves of gold,
Dreaming colors of trees ahead,
Orange sunrises swaying, red sunsets waving,
white birch crying yellow tears
Together we collected leaves of gold,
never pondering lonely made branches,
just loving the beauty of our weeping autumn

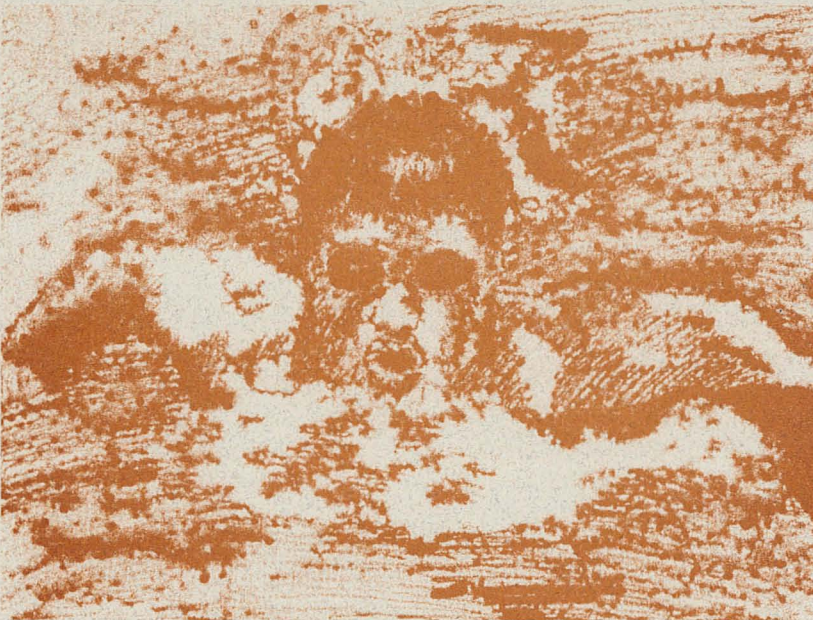
water. He stood there, oblivious to everything but the sea and the wind. He was in his element. His ancestors were ancient, Norwegian explorers. He's a son of the Viking mariners. Watching him experience the power and beauty of this place, I knew I had done the right thing in choosing Australia. I felt an overwhelming sense of connectedness to the wildness of nature displayed here. I felt new strength and a sense of rejuvenation. Maybe I wasn't devolving, maybe I was experiencing a new metamorphosis.

I picked up sand dollars and cowry shells as I walked the beach toward the cliffs. Eric saw me and waved. He started down the steep section of cliffs and I started to scramble up. We met on a flat boulder about fifty feet up. He put his arm around me and we both scanned the horizon. A huge ray glided below the surface of the aquamarine water. We both looked at each other, sharing the magic of the moment. It was the perfect way to end the daylight hours of our first day here.

The sun was setting and we climbed down from the rock. No words were exchanged. It was companionable silence. As darkness came, we headed back to camp, looking up at the stars as we walked. The milky way was spectacular in the southern hemisphere. We gazed up at the Southern Cross; crown jewel of the Australian night sky. Eric hugged me and told me how I had done a great job in the kayak and that he was proud of me. Then he leaned down and kissed me softly.

"You're gorgeous," he whispered, nuzzling my neck. "Do you know that?"

I closed my eyes and smiled because for the first time in a long time, I did feel gorgeous. I was proud of myself and I couldn't have felt more perfect.



Selection of Merit: The Swimmer
Shannon Peters



Poet's Blood

Suicide is in the poet's blood
slithering and sluicing through gorged veins,
into the valves, into but not out,
where it lies dormant
keeping neighbor with dour emotions
that flow to the wrist
and ejaculate through the pen.

Sexton, possessed witch,
unashamed to die.
Killed, 46, by her own hand
attached to the pulsing wrist
the blood, poet's blood, fleeting and flowing
unconsciously from the heart to the hand
through the wrist.
Young life falters. Cape Cod a memory —
I wonder if she wears shoes in her grave.

What did Sylvia see in the mirror?
Her father's reflection?
The shadow of his big shoes?
Was the smell of gas, of fire, or burning hair lurking?
The breaking of the bell jar,
the mirror, the mirror.
What did she see that scared her,
that made her want to die,
that ate at her mind
and chewed on her soul?

Suicide in the poet's blood —
O'Hara's wish to possess the strength
if case need be;
Roethke's gloom uninhibited with
dreams of bloody wrists
and hearts lying open
on lead smeared journals
where his words became
reality in *his* world.

Foreboding sense of doom
floods in the mind
the future, restless and cluttered
like autumn;
yet, spring still lurks
beneath the smudges.

■ Short Story: Selection of Merit
■ Christine O'Connor

Summer Smells

I walk out of my front door and onto my slowly cooling front stoop. I raise my nose and smell summer. It smells like the lake, freshly lit barbecues and bug spray. I study the orange clouds over the beach as I scuff my callused soles across my sidewalk. I sit on the warm hood of my rusty car and scratch a new mosquito bite on my knee. I take out my ceramic cigarette and fill it with some good marijuana that I bought earlier today. I recline on my warm hood and smoke as I watch my neighborhood streetlamps flicker on. I can hear the distant laughter of someone at the other end of the beach. Down the street I can hear the neighbor boys yelling as they play in the middle of the road. I stroke the new freckles on my arm as I watch languid couples stroll by. A woman walks by with her dog who sniffs me curiously. I say hello and take another hit of my summer smoke.

I am waiting for my ride and I am in no hurry.

She pulls up in her rusting Lincoln Continental. I tell her to park it. I want to go for a walk.

"C'mon," I say, "let's go get some root beer."

"Uhm...okay. Won't we be late though?"

"Trust me, this is more important."

We walk along the crumbling sidewalks and I listen to the streetlamps buzz.

"Can you hear that?" I ask her.

"Yeah," she answers, gazing around placidly.

"Y'know what that is?" I ask.

"Lamps."

"No," I say, "that's magic."

She smiles at me in a way that makes me think that she must be used to these moods I get in. I shrug and keep walking.

When we reach the main road, and as we walk down it, an old truck drives by and honks at us. I barely notice, but Becky flips it off. I giggle and she frowns at me. I take out my pot and offer her some. She takes the cigarette from me and takes a big hit.

"Y'know, root beer sounds pretty good," she says.

"And popsicles," I say, "I think popsicles, too."

We make it to the old store. The wood is peeling, and the beer signs are faded, but inside it shines with clean fluorescent. The owner looks at my feet and tells me I have to wait outside.

"Get me a Stewart's," I tell Becky, "and a popsicle. Orange. Yeah...orange."

I lean against the side of the scratchy building as I wait for her. I pull out my pack of cigarettes and light one of the last two. I look around the parking lot and the beach in the distance. I think about how summer used to be, with inner-tubes and sunscreen. I think about last summer when Becky and I went to the carnival. She was nicer then.

Becky comes out with my root beer and popsicle and a six-pack that I guess they let her buy 'cause she's a blond with big tits.

"Why don't we go to the party now?" she asks.

"Uhhh...okay," I reluctantly agree. "Let's walk."

We walk by houses and parks. Cars pumping bass ride by with their windows down. I forget my root beer craving and open a bottle of the real stuff. It's the kind of night where you have to search for a while before you find any oxygen to breathe. It is so sticky out that I reach down my shirt and rub the cold condensation from my beer bottle on my chest. Becky looks down her nose at me.

"That's gross," she says.

"I'm hot," I answer.

"Whatever."

I'm beginning to wonder why I said I'd go to this party with her at all.

I can hear the party from a block away. Great.

We walk through the car-littered lawn up to the doorway. We walk in and my mood sinks as I see who'll be my company all night.

"Becky!"

I see an obviously drunk girl run towards us like she's walking on stones.

"I didn't think you were coming," she says, and I can smell her cinnamon breath.

She leads Becky into another room and I am left behind standing in a pool of spilled beer. The music is rap and the people all look like they're hiding something.

I wish I never came.

I walk into the kitchen and find the keg. I take my spot next to it and stay there all night.

I drink about half a glass before I am almost knocked off my feet by some gargantuan, smelly thing. I figure that if I stay much longer I'll wish I hadn't.

I walk through the house trying to find Becky as I try to avoid more of the drunk, smelly oafs. I finally see her walking into one of the bedrooms. I grab her elbow.

"C'mon," I say, "let's go."

"No way," she says, "I'm gonna see if Bob's better than my boyfriend."

I just stand there as she closes the bedroom door.

I cannot believe her.

I stumble over bodies as I make my way to the door. No one pays me much attention. And for once, I'm glad.

I leave the hell-house and every step farther away I get the better I feel. I wish I could be mad. All I feel is hollow, like those bunnies with the candy eyes I used to get in my Easter baskets. I tilt my head back and try to find the stars. I see one that might just be an airplane, but I wish on it anyway. I am sweating behind my knees and in my elbows. I remember how the lake water feels on a night like this. I turn myself in the direction of the beach. My pinkie toe catches on the uneven sidewalk, so I stop for a minute to look at it. I walk under the streetlamp and study its scraped-up rawness. I shrug and move on.

I remember a map I once saw of prime bombing targets. I remember seeing that red thumb-tack jutting from my city. It's because of the water. And the factories. So many factories.

Alumni Poetry:
Linda Harmon

Silken Slivers

Silken slivers

Velvet threads

Remember a time

when words were not dead

A time of tip toes

times untold

Freshness

fullness

Invitations

to the soul

Winding weaving

forever conceiving

a time to discover

and of believing

I walk over the cool asphalt of the beach parking lot. I make it to the swings. I think about stopping to feel the wind, but another bead of sweat just left a trail from my neck to collect in my bra. I walk over the scratchy grass. I walk over the soft sand like jello under my feet. I hear voices coming from behind the bathrooms. I wipe my shiny face on my T-shirt as I slowly approach.

Three faces look up at me. They are three boys. Men. I have seen two of them around before. I even almost had a conversation with the one holding the guitar, once. They were passing a glowing pipe, but I think I interrupted them.

"Uhm...hi," I say.

"Hi. Jez," says the one holding the guitar whose name is Johnny, I think. I can't believe that someone who doesn't know me knows my name. I'm not the kind of person whose name precedes her visage.

I smile.

"Want to smoke this bowl with us?" Johnny asks.

I reach out my hand and thankfully take a pull of the sweet-tasting pipe.

When we're finished with it, I take out my little box that is holding the rest of mine.

I pass around my cigarette and start to feel more comfortable.

Johnny starts to strum out a tune that I know. I whistle along.

"We were just about to leave," Johnny tells me, "do you want to come?"

"Uh, sure," I say, even though I don't know where I'm going.

We finish up the last round and start walking towards the cars. We come to Johnny's car that is little and red like a ladybug. The two boys whose names I don't know and who haven't really talked sit in the back seat. I ride shotgun next to Johnny.

We drive for just a little while. We come to a small brick house that I guess must be Johnny's. When we're inside, I sit down and light my last cigarette.

I don't know why I lit this cigarette. The room is the size of my bathtub, and everyone has a cigarette going. I look at one of the boys whose name I don't know. I remember once I saw him at the movie theater standing in line for popcorn. He is very pretty. He smells like fabric softener and dirty hair

Man, he smells good.

I take another hit off my cigarette as I notice his nose. He has a big nose. I think that only me and probably a few dachshounds think that his nose is attractive.

I don't want him to notice me staring, so I look at his feet. I notice his mismatched socks. One is short, the other long. His knees look like potatoes.

God, he's beautiful.

He is looking at my feet, too.

I pick up a Magic Eight Ball that is lying on the floor. I shake it and ask if he wants to kiss my toes.

"The answer is not clear," it responds.



Selection of Merit:
Blackened Eyes
Thomas Becka

I ask if he will touch my feet.
"Ask again later," it ambiguously orders.
I ask if he likes the carpet.
"Yes."

Later, as I leave to go, the boy, whose name I've found out is Joey, offers to walk me home. I try to sound calm as I accept.

We walk along the streets that have been long-quiet. I figure it's pretty late by now. I wonder where Becky is and then I decide I don't care. Joey talks for a long time. Nothing he says makes much sense to me, but I like the sound of his voice.

"Do you want to go to the beach for a minute?" he stops and asks me.

"Sure," I answer as butterflies start doing tangerines in my belly.

We go back to the beach. This time, I grab a swing.

"What're you doing?" Joey asks me. "It's this way."

I have no idea what he's talking about, but I follow him anyway. We come to the building I originally found them behind. Joey pulls a key from his pocket and unlocks what looks like a supply closet. He walks in and sits on a little cot in the corner.

"C'mon," he says while patting the spot next to him. "Come sit down."

I feel a little weird about this, but I spend too much time being scared.

I walk in and sit down next to him. I can smell beer on his breath as he leans in to kiss me. I thought I wanted this, but I feel a little uncomfortable. Oh, well, I guess I have to stop being a dork sometime.

His lips touch mine softly, like I'm made of sugar. It feels new and wonderful. But then, he grabs me and kisses me roughly, like I'm sandpaper. My lips hurt, and it isn't fun anymore because now I'm scared.

I tell myself to shut up. I tell myself that this is good.

All of a sudden he is on top of me, kissing me with lips like wet coals. I can hear the waves crashing against the shore outside the closed door. I meant to go home an hour ago. His left hand is on my hip, and the other one is buried in my hair—grasping.

Every breath I take fills up my toes as I feel his shorts rub against me. I close my eyes and try to think about something else. I remember when I was younger, I used to go to the beach and make sandcastles for hours. By the time the sun set, I would have whole cities.

I can hear him breathing as he takes off my shorts. I remember a doll I got one Christmas. He is mumbling something as he slides inside me. I try to remember my multiplication tables up to twelve. I spell 'alleviate' in my head. I remember the name of the goldfish I had when I was six. I wish I had some gum.

He rolls off me and zips up his shorts.

"I have to pee," I say as I leave the building, pulling on my shorts. I don't stop walking.

I raise my nose in the air to smell summer. All I smell is sex. I pretend that I smell pine trees. I stumble along, headed for home; my grace left in the utility closet. I walk along trying to feel good. The magic from the beginning of the night has left me. If this is how you make friends, I think I'd rather

be alone.

I find myself at the party house again. I don't wonder how I got here; I just walk in. I walk around blindly until I find Becky passed-out in an empty bed. I shake her awake.

"C'mon," I say, "let's go."

She grunts and stands up. I pick up her pants off the floor and hand them to her. Earlier tonight I hated her, but now I just feel sorry for her. I put my arm around her waist and help her to the door. We get outside and she sits on the curb.

"Walk," I say, "walk, dammit."

She looks at me and starts crying.

"Jesus Christ," I mutter and I start walking. My patience has left me. Once, I would've done anything for Becky. Now, I wouldn't care if she died. She is staying at my house tonight, and the idea of waking up in the morning and having to look at her, hating her, and knowing I'm no better, makes me want to puke.

I keep walking and I don't look back. For the first time in weeks, I wish I was wearing shoes.

I walk along and I think of my parents at home. I wonder if they'll be up when I get home. I imagine them looking in my eyes and knowing that I'm not their little girl anymore. I look into my mother's eyes as she falls to the floor clutching her chest, screaming,

"Why?!?"

I try to think of an answer to satisfy myself. All I can come up with is that I was stupid. I am stupid. I decide that my feelings don't matter anymore since I can't feel them anyway. Maybe Becky and I are a perfect match.

I hear her walk up to me.

"Jez...?"

"Don't worry about it," I tell her, "I get it now. Let's go swimming."

We reach my beach and go in our clothes. We splash and float for ages. I don't want to get out until I'm clean. I'll know I'm clean when I can laugh.

"Becky, tell me a joke," I say.

"I don't know any jokes," she answers.

I start laughing. Just small giggles at first. Then, I'm rolling in the waves swallowing the water as my laughter rings through the neighborhood. I get closer to shore and writhe on the wet sand as the waves rush over me. Becky looks at me quizzically and gets out. She starts to dry off as I clutch my belly. I can't stop. I can't stop.

I open my eyes as my laughter turns into mere chuckles. I look around and Becky is gone. It is almost time for the sunrise.

I giggle as I stand and brush the sand from my arms. I keep giggling as I walk up the beach to my house. I raise my nose in the air and can smell summer again. I relish the feel of the warm grass between my toes. I stretch my arms towards the sun. I breathe deeply and smile.

I smile.

The Songs of Men

1.

Drawn into a circled moon, the moon
looks back unperturbed. Stark silhouette
of a black walnut tree in my own back yard,
etched and illumined in silver, shatters
that disc into cutting shards like a dinnerplate
dropped on a dark tile floor or a round mirror
fumbled in transport, each piece
lending a reflection.

2.

I phoned my father earlier today
under the usual guise of business
except this time when I asked him
how he was he actually answered:
he'd been to the dentist,
his teeth were bad, no doubt
worn down gnawing the bones
of his life, and would have to be
pulled. This simple news
of his mortality was more that I could
casually bear, wrapped me in a wet woolen
blanket of sadness, harder to swallow
than a fist-sized stone.

3.

As a boy I saw a photo of my father
as a young man camping in the north
woods: shirtless, powerful, muscular, lean,
with wide shoulders, large arms, and massive hands,
dressed in khaki pants and leather boots,
a sheathed hunting knife he made himself
hanging at his side, dark shock of wavy hair,
clear eyes, an easy smile I did not recognize,
mythic male animal figure confident in posture.

4.

He lived his young summers working
on his grandfather's farm, growing and harvesting
wheat and corn, raising Black Angus bulls and chickens
on eighty acres my great-father cleared
of trees and stones with his two prized Belgian
workhorses. On Saturdays they would go
into town together, his granddad drinking Red Cap Ale
and playing checkers. When the other farmers
asked him why he never hired help he said,
"The boy," he never called him by his name, "The boy
can do more work than any man I ever paid."

5.

Years later our family would visit the farm on Sundays.
My great-grandfather would kill a couple chickens,
break their necks in his wrenching hands,
whack limp heads off with a sharpened ax,
hang them upside down to bleed,
sticking yellow feet in slots
cut into arms of a weathered wooden rack
shaped like the holy crucifix. While birds were
plucked clean, gutted and cooked,
my brothers and I would eat wheat by the handful,
reaching into feed bins in the painted barn,
stuffing our pockets, carrying with us rich grain smells,
run to play pirates on our ship of stacked wood,
forcing one another at swordpoint to walk the plank,
jumping off into sandy oceans below. After supper
we would sit out in the darkening yard, under
a haloed porch lamp, and crack black walnuts
with hammers on a concrete slab, digging out
and eating the sparse sweet meat.

6.

I knew little of your courting
my mother-to-be besides legends
of your deaf persistence, refusals
to be banished from a promised land,
infuriating as you were endearing in your
anachronistic quest: motorcycle-mounted
galahad, steadfast in chivalrous intentions
for a virtuous maiden's hand.

7.

I have now spent half my allotted years
chasing and wrestling phantasms
of who you were and what a man should be,
forced in your absence to contend
with symbols from a dark and masculine past.
I would take the key from its hiding place
and let myself into your private room
filled with rifles, pistols, bows, and knives,
polished racks of animal antlers,
worn leather flight jacket and white silk scarf,
medals and ribbons for marksmanship,
trophies of a golden man in a open boxing stance.

8.

None of which made sense to me
when you came home tired, working
three jobs, and the whole house fell
to a hushed silence as you walked dispirited
from the hallway to the living room and dropped
dead asleep in your chair, tie yanked loose
still hanging from your neck. I feared you
more than I loved you then, terrified
by your power to destroy me, enraged
by your elusiveness, ashamed of my failings
to grab hold, throw you down, pin your shoulders
to the ground and by my weighty pressings
demand some answer of what was expected
from me. I am the worm you will not
be rid of, burrowing into your eyes, brain,
heart, lungs, blood, muscle, and bone,
hunting after the lost songs of men
we have forgotten how to sing.

9.

Whenever I visit my grandparents,
my grandmother looks like she just saw
a ghost, pale in her constant catholic
terror and worry, musing over how much
I look like my grandfather when he
was my age. His bones are pressing
outward against his thinning skin
as if at any minute he might
walk out of himself, but his eyes,
his eyes are at peace with this world.
After his heart was attacked for want
of blood to feed it, and his chest
laid open for surgical repairs, he awakened
from his sleep of anesthesia
with some new memory: men in my family
started hugging one another, my father
included, arms and hands encircling
these imperfect mortal forms, holding
each other tight a moment, binding and healing
the open wounds, conferring through touch
what can only now begin to be
roughly transformed into words.

10.

Things my father told me: You might as well be honest
because you'll always get caught. You'll have to work
for everything you own. A hard day's work never hurt
anyone. It's better to starve than go on welfare.
Don't squirt charcoal fluid on already lighted briquets.
They're not guns, damnit, it's a firearm, weapon, or piece.
Aim a bow with both eyes open. Lead with your left
and keep up your guard. Always leave a campsite as if
you were never there. You're old enough to know better.
When I say no, I mean no. Go ask your mother. If you
think you're big enough you can take your chances with me,
but if you ever hurt your mother I swear I'll kill you.
Ten dollars is too much to pay for a tie. What I do
with my own time is my business and any boss who thinks
different can shove it up his ass. No ifs, and, or buts
about it. Smoking filtered cigarettes is like french
kissing through a napkin. I can't die because I'm
too mean for heaven and the devil's afraid of me.
A good neighbor lives at least a mile away. Your
mother's the best thing that ever happened to me.
It may not be much, but it's mine.

11.

These men who came before us loved
not always well, but the best, perhaps
the only way they knew; doing the hard work
on farms, in factories and foundries, metalshops
and offices, creating and sustaining families,
laboring in a world that gave up nothing
easily. My father is fishing with his
three young sons on a wide walkway
underneath a bridge. It rained the whole day
and all we caught were bullheads; ugly, mud brown,
slimy, spined, hard, tight, unyielding as fists,
eyes bulging in amazement at our desperate
little grips, unable to give up
a swallowed hook. We ate sandwiches
without even washing our hands, came home
cold, wet, tired, and proud, carrying the biggest
of our inedible catch in buckets, happy
just to have been with you.

12.

Only the forgiving will be themselves forgiven,
and their fragmented men made whole. Before
the disappearance of another moon,
stuck in the branches of a black walnut tree,
displaying in days what takes us years to learn,
I promise to come back to you, my father,
to share this diminishing song. My anger has been
carved away, revealing a face of grief, mourning
the mystery and silence of men. I return these
splintered images, spirits left too long wandering
my restless streets at night. Take them back
into yourself, take them back, and me.
This is our only remaining odyssey, the raging
battle of sorrow and joy waged between fathers and sons.
I have plunged my hand deep in your wounded side,
and know that you are real. I embrace your curses
and blessings, your dreams, fears, and regrets,
drink at the fountain of unwept tears,
and love you for who you are.



Selection of Merit:
Native American Spirituality
Rick Singer



Poetry: Selection of Merit
Janet Murphy

A Hundred Years from Now

Our lives are full and busy
As we struggle through each day
To climb the ladder of success
Our reward — a larger pay
We strive to make improvements
With sweat upon our brow
Only to be forgotten
A hundred years from now.

Life rolls ever onward
Though daily souls are claimed
No one takes much notice
They're replaced with a new name
We scale the wall of envy
With greed we're well endowed
Only to be forgotten
A hundred years from now.

We fight to gain control
We think we need more space
Did God give us a world too small
To house the human race?
Trying to secure the future
Through the rest of the world we plow
Only to be forgotten
A hundred years from now.

Acceptance is important
On the road to fortune and fame
Applause the seal of approval
Success the name of the game
We want to be remembered
After we've taken our bows
Yet we'll be forgotten
A hundred years from now.

We store up gold and silver
As if we're here to stay
Yet when our soul departs this earth
Here our worldly goods must stay
Everything we've worked for
No matter how sincere our vow
Will all belong to someone else
A hundred years from now.

The moon will cast its light
Down on the earth below
And whether you are here or not
Stars will still put on their show

The day star in its brilliance
Will still burn bright and proud
For the residents of planet earth
A hundred years from now.

Far better to have your name
In the Lamb's book of life
To live in peace and harmony
Not anger, hate and strife
You may not end up famous
Or a big hit with the crowd
But paradise will be your home
A hundred years from now.

Day After

I lie on my freshly made bed and stare at my blank wall. Parts of me hurt, but I don't really notice. I remember how his eyes looked when it happened.

I put my pinkie finger in my mouth and begin chewing on my ragged cuticle. I study my work and go on to the next one. A lawn mower sputters on as I start on my index finger. I move to my other hand. I stare straight ahead, my thoughts moving so fast that I can't focus on any of them. How refreshing.

I finish my cuticles, so I start chewing the tips of my fingers. I peel and chew, chew and swallow—dazedly cannibalizing myself. I taste like thick paper. I keep chewing. I chew until I notice blood dripping onto my clean, white bedspread. I move to the next finger.

For a while, I just lie and watch my blood make patterns on the white. It starts as a drop, then it seeps into the fibers, and my bed is full of red snowflakes. I watch as they grow darker, get bigger.

My doorbell rings. I walk slowly down my steps, leaving a trail of blood in my wake. I open my front door with the heels of my hands. He is standing there.

"Hey...Jesus Christ! What did you do to your fingers?" He looks shocked. I am mildly surprised.

"Huh?" I say. I look down at my hands. A pool of blood is forming under my feet. I think the red is kind of pretty.

He pushes through my door and leads me to the kitchen. He makes me sit at the table, my new dishtowel under my hands. I watch the blue flowers on the towel turn into purple blobs as he rummages through my cupboards. He sits down next to me. I look out the window as he pours peroxide over the bloody sticks that were once my fingers. I don't pay him much attention until he gets to the bandages.

"What are you doing?" I ask as I watch him cutting the gauze.

"You need something on these," he says. He is looking at me like I'm crazy.

"I want the band-aids," I say. "The ones with the dinosaurs."

"What? Band-aids won't work! Jesus, Liz, these aren't just little scratches, you're missing the tips of your fingers!"

I stand up and get the crushed cardboard box of band-aids out of my cupboard. I get the paper off with my teeth, and he watches as I struggle to peel the plastic off the back. My fingers don't work so good. He takes the band-aid from me and puts in on my pinkie. I wince, but just a little.

Now he is gone. He didn't want to leave; he wanted to take me to the hospital. I told him to go. I told him I really didn't need my fingers for anything anyway.

I am lying in bed again. The blood has mostly dried. I lie in the fading sunlight coming through my window. I stare at my wall. I start paying attention to the parts of me that hurt. I forget about my fingers.

Season

The walk down the craggy path was treacherous, not from mud or the stinging heavy rain of the morning, but from the steady snow falling since noon. He bent his head closer to his chest and protectively clutched the collar of his coat. Each step was distractedly calculating to “feel” for secure footing. Twenty more paces and he would be closer. Closer to the Giver of Safety that had failed them all.

Nearer to the green light that had disappeared in a white veil, absolving itself of duty. Through squinted, tired eyes, he sees the deceitful behemoth straight ahead. His hatred of this thing he loves can bring him to his knees. He leans against it, rubbing a gloved hand across a pale face. As a watcher stands on the shore of the frozen lake, he is grateful the snow covers his tears. He closes his eyes, and lets his battered mind drift to that one moment when the lake rapes his memory.

Another time, many many years before reveals a smiling young man. This youth has hardly grown from boyhood; impatiently flinging his adolescence aside to arise triumphantly on the morn of his eighteenth birthday. He dresses hurriedly and races from his room. He knows he will not see room nor home for a very long time. Every third step is missed as gladdened feet come to rest in her kitchen. Her back is to him and she stands before the fire. Her head is lowered and he knows she has been crying. She turns slowly and forces a breath through pursed lips. Her face is wan and lean. The thick chestnut hair is swept back from a small face neatly gathered at the nape of her neck. Lately, he has noticed the grey dove-wings at her temples. She states simply she has earned them. A “quiet badge” of age she calls them. “Ma,” he whispers. Those large brown eyes connect with his blue ones. God, how he was revered and feared those huge brown eyes. “Stay, drink your tea, and don’t rush so. You exhaust me. It’ll not leave without you.” He sits, holding the steaming mug in long slender fingers.

The sun has just begun to yawn and stretch awake in the lilac-blue eastern sky outside the kitchen window. He glances from her face to the clock on the mantle. Each agonizing sweep ticks slowly onto the next as five minutes of strangled silence slips by, then abruptly ends with her voice. She speaks haltingly, each word measured. “I’ve had this since before you were born. I want you to take it with you. Keep it safe, and it’ll keep you safe.” She places a folded square into his



Selection of Merit:
Thinking of Goya
Beverly Wallace

Poetry: ■
Selection of Merit ■
Lisa Castle

Collage

The chrome sunlight streamed
through the window,
Illuminating the framed childhood
of my son.

His cherub face peered out curiously,
as drool glossed his tiny mouth.
His yellow pajamas and terry-cloth bib,
A must-have for the evening affair.

A giggling clown posed by the hearth
On that autumn day, just yesterday it seems...

A thirty-nine inch angler, dangles
A walleye over dad's catch for the day.
His favorite camouflage jacket is
A must-have for the evening affair.

The moments in time, flashed on paper,
Smell of puppy dog hair,
Oatmeal hands, and bubbles.
And of warm, sweet scented breath
on my sleeve.

The comforting glow, felt when rocking
this powered bundle in my arms,
Warms me again.
As I walk out the door with my first-born,
Sporting his blue cap and gown,
A must-have for the evening affair.

right breast pocket. He pats it and her hand, at once noticing
a slight weight under the cloth.

She take his arms and he stands. "It's time," she says.
He nods, and they embrace awkwardly. He impulsively kisses
the top of her head and releases her. The worn leather satchel
is scooped up and carried out the door. Fresh dew-tinged
morning air is inhaled deeply by both. Dawn gently cradles
the day's infancy, wrapping it delicately in rose-hued gauze.

We rub sleepy eyes to better focus
bejeweled rays swirling golden tendrils
softly down to earth. It allows for growth
and heat reaping due praise for the bountiful
harvest. She know the sun can burn as well
as warm. Scarlet streaks bleeding onto an
azure background confirmed this
misgiving—"red sky at morn sailors be
warned." I will remember this day, she
thought, I will remember this day always.

With the heat of the day intensifying,
the boy removes his coat, never seeing the
wrapped cloth fall from the pocket. It drops
silently into the water as he boards the ship,
and nestles on the lakebed for almost an
eternity.

The watcher stood on the shore and
knows well the season of the witch. He
knows the roiling waves lend themselves
to unsolved mysteries. They guard their
occult secrets from the men who sail their
collective histories. A ship of any
magnitude cannot be destroyed from
something which is not there. There cannot
be a signal of distress, a cry for help, a
clamoring onto upper decks, choked
screams as lungs fill with ice water, nor the
snapping of timbers meeting their death.

The watcher weeps for all of them. He
"senses" rather than "sees" their destiny.
Their future is his past, and he feels he is
too damn young to feel this old. A locket
tucked lovingly into a young man's pocket
by his mother before his first voyage
provided no safety from the tempestuous
rage of the lakes. Thirty-three lives were
lost in a late November gale from which no
aborted wreckage was forthcoming.

A full century later, the watcher stands
on the bank of this gaping maw of
lachrymose Deity. He clutches in his hand
a silver locket. The woman's face within
is unknown to him. The memory is
unknown to him. There is an eerie
affirmation in the wanton howls of the north

wind. There is a resolute knowledge that he started to die on
the day of his birth—the child of a man never born.

Poetry: Selection of Merit
Stacie Olshove

He Says He's Going Hunting

I helped him pack today.
I kept thinking how selfish I was being for not wanting him to go away.
I sat on the couch and watched him run through the house trying to locate
things that I knew exactly where they were located. But, I wasn't going to
help. I was going to sit right there on that couch and watch him suffer. It
is his own damn fault that he couldn't find anything he needed. He had waited
to the last minute to pack. The night before is the worst night to pack.

The night before should be saved for the wife. He should spend time with her.
I am jealous, I want to be the one that is going to be with him for ten days. Those
ten days are days we will never have together. He says I am crazy for the way I
think, well why doesn't he think that way? He says we need a break. He says time
makes the heart grow fonder. He says that he worked hard for this.
We had a break, sixteen years had escaped before we found each other, and now he feels
we deserve one.

Well, I gave him a break. I found his hunting gear and his thermal underwear, that he
claimed he could not find anywhere. He says he's going hunting. I hope he finds what
he is hunting for.



Selection of Merit:
An-#1
Douglas E. Wacker

■ Essay: Selection of Merit
■ JoAnne McCartney

Out of My Hands

Master bedroom, 18' x 24'. *Our own bathroom.* Vaulted ceilings with peaks. A dormer window forty-five feet up on the south side of the bedroom. We purposely left that window free of shades and draperies. Landscaping was our business and unlike the hundreds we advised, we did see things like towering Sugar Maples as being separate from the house. It was all part of the effect and our idea was to 'bring it all in' through the windows. It went so beautifully with the rolling, forest green carpet that stretched throughout our old farmhouse. Most days I loved the wide open feeling of that bedroom. Wednesday, April 9th of '97 though, I felt so small and insignificant in it.

For one thing, I was a liar. Wrapped in pajamas, I faked a headache so big, so bad, it prevented me from getting out of bed. I stirred once with each good-bye — my husband's at 6:00 a.m., the kids' at twenty minute intervals between 7:30 and 8:00 a.m. The girls were squealing with excitement that morning about our plans for Sunday— a much needed day together at the mall. "Four more days, Mom!" They sang as they kissed my good-bye. I drew a deep breath of relief when I heard the front door close for the last time. Curled up tight against my pillow, cheeks flush against the cotton, blankets drawn around me, the alienation process had begun.

All I needed was an acceptable way of disconnecting from the world, a few days of isolation. It was an unlikely goal, considering that loneliness and desperation were the very things that buried me in the first place.

I'd felt the rumblings of wreckage around Monday. They were part of a cycle I'd lived most of my adult life. As my physician advised on a number of occasions, there were foods I should have avoided, rest I should have gotten, and time I should have taken for myself at the onset of depression. Sometime after the kids were born and we started our own business I decided I didn't have the time or the energy for such ridiculous thinking. I was thirty-eight and believed I was invincible.

By Wednesday, I was wrapped in a terry cloth robe and a comforter, thinking about how to avoid life. I'd call my office, my committee chairpersons, my college professor and tell them I couldn't do any of it. I'd been pretending the whole time. I'd leave my husband a note saying I'd left. Not for good, just left. He could tell the kids I went to visit their aunt. I'd drive until I found the little town in northern Michigan I'd dreamed about frequenting once I joined the ranks of famous and reclusive authors. I'd compose my best essays by day and walk the streets and visit with the townspeople by night.

The phone rang and I checked the caller ID to determine whether or not to answer. It was the guy Mike had called about renting a bulldozer for the weekend. The men in my family knew they'd better plan something big of their own for Sunday or they'd be fighting over the one chair in Hudson's while the girls tried on bell bottom pants and green and orange flower-power tops.

All week long, everyone talked of their plans. Mike and Mikey would tackle the piece of uneven land at our nursery next door and lean back on shovels together during breaks to talk about how it looked. The girls had filled out our Sunday schedule with trips to Claire's Boutique where earrings were three for a dollar. We'd get warm Mr. Salty pretzels dipped in cheese for ourselves and double-decker chocolate chip cookies for Grandma. They valued those aspects of the day as much as they did the shoes. There was a sense of correctness about the whole thing. Making plans was a special thing in our home.

By Friday night I could barely contain my unreasonable anger and frustration. The normal cacophony of the dog howling to clarinet practice and the kids wrestling on the floor caused a nervous energy in my arms and chest. I wasn't part of anything anymore and made sure everyone knew it. The kids took over and the singing stopped. Mike took them for rides on 'the road with no cars', an unpaved street they named when they were little where they saw deer and got to drive the truck sometimes. He and I talked late at night about how my day had gone, which mortified me. I was an invalid in a bath robe at thirty-eight. Sensing that the window of opportunity for reaching me was closing quickly, he asked me to wait while he looked through an antique table for a favorite book of his. He returned and read to me a passage about acceptance, as he had so many times before. His normally calming voice only pureed the commotion in my mind as he read,

"When I am disturbed it is because I find some situation, some fact of my life unacceptable to me...and I can find no serenity until I accept that situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment...Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God's world by mistake. Until I accept life on life's terms..."

The kitchen ceiling fan whirled above me until I thought I'd become sick. I ambled through the room lonelier than I'd ever remembered feeling in my life, stalling out at the window sill that faced the back yard, one hand clamped on the decorative grill at eye level, the other fixed on a handful of flesh at my stomach, my head hung low somewhere in between, sobbing and inconsolable. Dumbfounded by a condition he thought he understood, he waited still at the table, then pulled me from the window and led me by my shoulders to our bedroom, the book of acceptance flip-flapping shut on the



Selection of Merit:
Sharp
Heidi Bisson



Poetry: ■
Selection of Merit ■
Stacie Olshove

Extinction

I dream of poetic moments
where white becomes black type.
I want to go and stay where my
soul yearns to be. Childhood.

As a child, I always could find
that sport under a tree to escape.
But
now I search and only find a sub-
division with lost deer dodging
traffic. They can no longer find
the stream and the trees that
ran through
their
Field.

The very same field I used to go
for walks in is no longer there.
Once thriving and green
is now brown and gray with
bright blossoms of concrete blood
seeping to the streets.

Domiciles and asphalt are
the new woods. Childhood
will never be; without the
fields and nature
Humanity adapts to the concrete.
We become obsolete.
We are the dinosaur.

kitchen table for the night.

Sunday dawned with an unusually late icy rain and I stayed in bed powerless while my husband and son talked of the day's plans over coffee and Nestle's Strawberry milk in the kitchen. I hated their simple contentment with themselves. The girls woke happily, showered then bounced into my bathroom; squeaky clean and wrapped in terry cloth, expecting the ritual of scented lotions and powders I let them use on special occasions. I struck out verbally at them, ordering them to pick up the towels they flung to the ceiling in excitement. In the mirror I saw a reflection of a mean witch and I was horrified at how she was treating my kids. Had all things been reasonable, I'd have hugged them, apologized and asked for their forgiveness. But I couldn't. They were 12 and 9 and the time never seemed right as they were growing up to explain depression to them. They cowered in shame for a moment then retired to their bedrooms where they would organize their thoughts on how to salvage our Perfect Day.

I dressed then fussed over stupid errands around the house for two hours, wiping off the toaster and taking extra garbage bags to the laundry room, hoping to regain control of my raging nervous system. Shortly after noon and two hours behind schedule, the girls stood at the back door with purses full of dollar bills and some change and their favorite CD's for the ride. I loaded a mug with coffee, cream and sugar and dragged myself to the car.

Two miles down the road the rain had quit and my youngest daughter asked, "Can you be in a good mood now for our special day, Mom?" To understand depression is to have experienced it not as a reaction to an event but as it permeates the being like a dark cloud absorbed by the body whole.

"I'll try," I said flatly, the voice of the devil in me. On better trips we were usually settled in with seat belts and Cokes, fast-forwarding to the best songs on the discs, singing and dancing. I felt I could no more manage the fifty mile trip ahead than I could row across the Atlantic Ocean. A week's worth of emotion calmed to a deep sadness that welled up inside me and bottlenecked at my throat as I tried to decide what to do. I'd made this special promise a week ago but everything had gone backward since. I prayed for the strength to snap out of it and not disappoint the girls, one of whom was singing, the other who lay across the back seat, spirit compromised. Detached from the events as only an eight year old can be— or worse yet, pretending

— my daughter rummaged through the treasures in her little purse that matched her spring jacket, then plucked a plastic Coke cap from inside it, redeemable for a free drink. I remembered her winning it a month earlier. Untangling it

from a necklace, she turned to me with the bright-eyed expression of having just discovered gold and said, "We can use THIS for a free drink at the mall if we want to Mommy!"

I turned toward her and the sweetness and the innocence and the last year of baby fat in her cheeks struck me all at once, like a shining symbol of the goodness that breathes and lives and thrives outside the walls of depression, if only I'd see. Her hands were still little. I remembered what it was like having special things in a purse. She was only eight years old for God's sake. I broke into tears as fear and confusion ravaged my senses. Such is the madness of depression, sparing just enough of the mind to allow acute awareness. Taken down finally, I let my foot off the accelerator and coasted into the car pool parking lot conveniently laid out fifty yards from the expressway.

Limestone pebbles popped beneath the tires as we idled past the stone faces in the parking lot. Everything I'd come to count on in life, that I was a good parent, that working hard at things mattered, that I could manage my condition, collapsed around me. I was in the hell of depression — the worst I'd ever experienced — and I'd brought the girls with me.

I wanted finally to cry out my powerlessness over it as if turning on the light would disappear the monster, but there were children to consider. I asked God to help me with a reasonable explanation.

"Mom doesn't feel...(hiih)...good today...(hiih)...," I sobbed, flushing out a week's worth of poison and fogging up a bad pair of sunglasses.

"Can we ...(hiih)...do this...(hiih)...another time?" I begged, head down, hands squeezing ten and two on the steering wheel. We crawled to a stop and there was stillness everywhere. The girls were frightened. They reached out to me with little fingertips, one on my shoulder from the back seat, one on my knee from the front seat, wanting to help but afraid to get closer. Absent was the usual order of dialogue. Fears and explanations were exchanged in chunky fragments.

"Are you OK, Mommy?"

Reducing the problem to its simplest form, I tried to explain what makes Mom so scary sometimes.

"I have...(hiih)...problems...with...something called...(hiih)...de-bression," I cried, my lips and eyes so swollen from the day's tears that p's came out like b's. Still touching me, they asked me if I was going to faint. I told them I was very, very sad but that I loved them more than anything in the world. They assured me that it would be all right if we went to the mall another time.

"Why don't you just stay home from work tomorrow?"

The ice and rain from the morning had dissolved and the



Selection of Merit:
Mass Confusion
Greg Deglopper

world outside the car glared with light, a light that belonged to everyone but me. Even the lady in the parking lot who was working overtime Sunday had it. My heart slipped another half inch toward my empty stomach as if suspended by a worn thread ready to give way any second. My body recoiled, the rest of the tears spilling out three and five at a time with a hundred more behind them.

For all the heartbreak I felt, it was apparent that the end was near. Maybe the kids knew that too. We'd had enough of complicated talk and agreed that going home would be a good idea. I turned the car east and idled out of the parking lot carrying a cargo of damage with me.

My husband of sixteen years stood motionless at the back door, waiting for the look. The one that says I want him, I need him, it's over. I'm sorry. We exchanged a muddy hug on the steps while the kids looked on in relief.

By early evening my life became recognizable again. I hung the wet towels in the bathroom, talked a lot with God and made dinner while the kids wrestled and fought on the trampoline. Before bed I made sure they understood that my depression was separate from anything they could ever do or say. They seemed to accept that.

At the end of every depressive episode, when I can think logically again, I think about where I've been, how I got there and how to handle it the next time. This particular one had been so thoroughly unrelenting, there was something I was supposed to have gained from it.

It was imperative that I did — I didn't have another fight like it in me I knew. Nor did Mike and the kids. Putting the house back together, I picked up the book on acceptance and read the passage again. The meaning became clear as I read it over and over again—I can find no serenity until I accept the situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment...

As a young girl I believed I could fly. When I wanted to beat the boys at football, I simply made my feet move faster. When I thought I'd be sick from kneeling too long in church, I straightened my back and amazed myself at how time flew when I took control. I won spelling bees in grade school because I envisioned it happening the night before, tucked into bed after Mom helped me practice. All along I've had big plans for my life and for the most part have seen them realized. I hadn't had to learn about acceptance; things were always within my control. Through this particular episode I had no choice. God wasn't giving in until I saw it, which I finally did.

Rested, I believed that God was pleased with the outcome of his mission of April 13, 1997. I came to accept the notion of acceptance. Wisdom tells me He was retooling me for a time later in my life when it won't matter whether or not I'm the fastest runner.



New Life

This orgasmic rush
raped all my old memories —
left them blundered
tripped and bruised.

Left them tarnished and forsaken.
This blasphemy cloaks my sun,
like a winter cloud
swollen with icy, blistering tears
screaming thunderously with antagonism.

I shut my ears to the thunder
blanket my shoulder from the tears
and cower in your arms
for the security I have adulterated.

My stomach churns with each groan you made,
my spine shivers with each touch.
The heat, so hot
burning, singeing
as your cheek rests against my thigh.

I wanted nothing more than to feel your hands
upon my breast
feel your warmth against my womb.

My savior come to me
to lift me above the hollowness,
to drive away the demons,
resuscitate the dead air in my lungs
and breathe new life.

From a crickety park bench
we have traveled. This journey
of forsaken souls —
But to feel your hand upon my breast,
to feel
to feel again...

Is there sin without God?
Is there depravity without marriage?
Is there commitment without religion?

The flesh is weak,
but when minds entwine
such as ours
is there any greater sin?
Without God?

To covet the flesh
forsakes
to covet the mind
damns.

But to feel your cheek against my thigh
to hear your words,
even the slightest
is like jumping on a bed,
or skimming up walls.

To justify all that has been coveted
to relinquish the bruised and blundered memories
is to live and breathe your oxygen, your life force.

In the hollows of my mind,
there is a begging to repudiate,
a sense of damning
a foreboding image of a crickety, rusting bench
that instigated this ardent mutiny.
In the depths, there is a blissful silence
that relents.

There is no sin without God.

■ Short Story: Selection of Merit
■ Nicholas Laretz

Blank Check

It seemed like a good idea at the time—take a break from the rat race, help a friend in need, and experience a different part of the country. I had always prided myself on being a loyal friend. If a friend needed me, I was there—no questions asked.

On a cold December morning, two weeks after I had quit the best job I had ever had, I received a phone call from my best friend, Tim. Tim and I grew up together. We had been friends for over twenty years and there was nothing I wouldn't do for him. Tim had made the move to Florida three years

previous. He had followed his parents, who made the move seven years prior to that. Getting a call from Tim had come as a bit of a surprise. We had talked only once in the past three years. That one time was when I called Tim to express my condolences about his brother Jack. A drunken Jack had committed suicide by blowing the top of his head off with a high-powered deer rifle.

Before the phone call, I had been listening to a new broadcast about American's invasion of Panama. Upon answering the phone, much of my attention was still on the droning television. "What's that? Say that again. You want me to drive down to

Florida and help out with your business?" I asked, as I turned away from the television and gave my full attention to the conversation.

Tim indicated he was having a transportation problem with his escort business. Besides helping out with his business, Tim wanted me to meet his latest live-in girlfriend, Nancy, and to have a live-in drinking buddy—I thought to myself. I agreed to drive down before Tim had a chance to relate the details. What did I know about the escort business? I guess I had all the preconceived notions that anyone else would have. Tim said the business was on the up and up—this was good enough for me. If Tim needed a driver to solve his transportation problem, I was there.

Unlike most people I know, I can enjoy a Michigan winter. The day Tim called the thermostat read five below zero. Three days later I was saying good-bye to Michigan and looking forward to the trip south. I left behind one of the coldest Michigan winters. A little more than twenty-four hours later I was experiencing eighty-five degree weather. I was in short sleeves and loving it.

Tim's directions were letter-perfect. When I pulled into the secluded West Palm Beach cul-de-sac that led to a cluster of townhouses, I couldn't help but notice that Tim had come up in the world. As I exited my car, I breathed in the ocean



Selection of Merit:
Night Fall
Kelly Taggart

breeze and listening to the rustling of the palm trees. Leaving my luggage for later, I walked up to the door I assumed to be Tim and Nancy's.

Tim answered the door himself. This was a slight surprise to me. I had always known Tim to be the old-fashioned type. There were always specific gender roles in any of Tim's households. When it came to answering doors, it usually fell upon Tim's female partner to perform the task. As soon as the door opened, our hands clasped—this led to a full-blown hug. We were both wearing huge silly grins. I felt a strange mixture of foolishness and joy.

After Tim introduced me to Nancy, I asked to use the phone. Before I had left Michigan, I had promised I would let my mother know I had reached West Palm Beach safely. "Yeah, Phil. Go ahead," responded Tim. "Nancy, you show Nick where the phone is. I'll grab a couple of beers. When you're done with your phone call, we'll talk over old times."

After making the call, Tim showed me his collection of firearms. In the middle of showing me his 9mm Glock handgun, he asked if I was able to get through with my phone call. I said you know my mom; she wanted to know that I made it to West Palm Beach OK. She insisted I call as soon as I arrived, and that I call collect.

"You called collect?!" Tim's voice had raised an octave.

"Yes, I called collect. What's the big deal?"

"Phil, you don't understand. When you call collect from my home, it makes me look cheap."

"OK. If I make another call, it won't be collect."

Almost as an afterthought, Tim asked if I thought there was a chance my brother Mark would see my mother's phone bill. "I don't want Mark knowing my phone number. He's stuck his nose in my business before, he'll do it again," Tim replied bitterly.

My brother's wife and Tim's ex-wife were sisters. This meant that Tim and Mark had sometimes interacted socially. I had to admit Tim and Mark didn't get along. This didn't completely explain why Tim didn't want Mark knowing his phone number. After assuring Tim I would do my best to keep his phone number and address private, we all sat down to some conversation and ice-cold beer.

"Here. Take this," Tim said, while handing me what turned out to be a thirty-eight caliber semi-automatic pistol. I took the gun. The chrome-plated pistol garishly reflected the sunlight that was streaming through the French doors.

"I'm not going to carry a gun," I said, while handing the gun back.

■ Alumni Poetry:
■ Ben Chartier

But I'm Not

If I could be normal,
I'd be with you.
I think of this often,
If only you knew.
If I could be normal,
Then you would be there.
If you knew nothing else,
You'd know that I care.
If I could be normal,
And you could be mine.
I'd ask for nothing more,
But want some lost time.
If I could be normal,
Then maybe I'd see.
It's all about you,
You don't need me.

Tim stood up, practically jumping out of his chair. "All these other escort businesses are run by bull-dykes. I think they've been trying to set me up. They can't stand it when a real man is in charge," said Tim derisively.

All I could do was shake my head. Tim sat back down. He seemed to have calmed down a bit. I asked him when he wanted me to start chauffeuring the escorts. We agreed I could start the next day.

Within a week, we were to take a break from the business and drive to Tampa in order to spend Christmas day with Tim's parents. I had known Tim's parents most of my life. I knew I would feel comfortable in their home. Before visiting Tim's parents, we made a quick stop at the home of Nancy's mother and father. Since both sets of parents lived relatively close to one another, we were able to take care of both visits in a single day.

Poetry: 
First Place Tie 
Peryl Kennedy

Eighth Grade English

I should have paid attention
In eighth grade english class
When Mrs. Hornby made it clear
Her words would always last.

Now I sit in english two-o-two
Without the vaguest notion
Should water rhyme with hotter
Or just describe the ocean.

The day started out as good as could be expected. Our first visit went without complications. The second visit, on the other hand, had a major glitch. It seems Tim and his father had words. This had occurred outside of my presence. I never discovered what had been said. This caused the visit to end on a sour note. Tim was angry and uptight. I was feeling a little anxious myself.

After saying our good-byes, we proceeded on our way back to West Palm. Two blocks from his parent's house, Tim asked to make a stop so he could purchase some beer. "No way I'm going to have open beer cans in my car," I replied. I was paranoid about getting busted.

If I thought Tim was angry before, I was about to experience a new level. For a moment Tim was speechless. I thought that would be the end of it. Just as that thought crossed my mind, Tim suggested we find a motel for the night. At the time it seemed like a good compromise. Tim was getting his alcohol, and I was getting peace of mind.

After checking in at the first motel we came upon, Nancy and I drove to a nearby store. While grabbing two cases of beer, I noticed Nancy walking to the other side of the store. I set the beer on the counter and walked over to see if I could be of help to Nancy. As it turned out, she was looking for a specific snack item for Tim. I grew impatient. This was taking too long. I told her, "That's good enough; lets go."

When I entered the motel room I had no idea what I was in for. While I started adding cans of beer and ice to the bathroom sink, Tim walked over to the table where Nancy had put the bag with his requested snacks. After taking care of the beer, I opened one for myself and reentered the main room. What I came upon caught me completely by surprise. Tim had knocked the bag from the store onto the floor. Next came

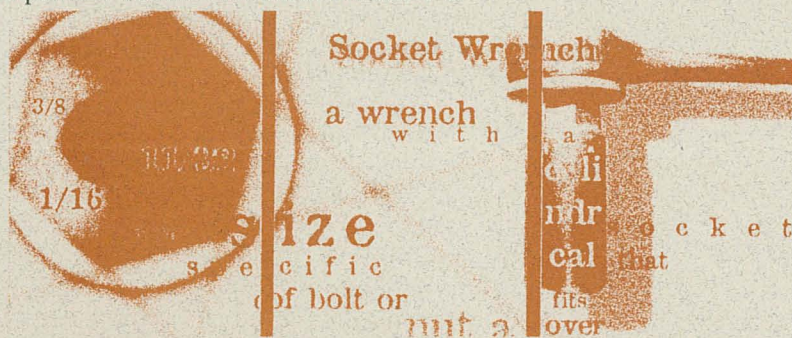
the shouting; Tim was throwing what could only be described as a child-like temper tantrum. He was furious that Nancy had failed to bring back exactly what he had asked for. When I heard this, I immediately interrupted, saying, "What's the big deal? It's not important. I rushed her out of the store. If you're going to yell at someone, yell at me." They both ignored me. After some more intense yelling, Nancy ran into the bathroom and locked the door. Tim grew quiet. He then began pacing back and forth. Thinking

things had calmed down, I found a chair and took a seat. Just as I was sitting down, Tim rushed over to the bathroom door. He started kicking at it. A few seconds later the door was off its hinge. Without taking time to think it over, I ran over to the bathroom. What I saw turned my stomach. Tim was pummeling Nancy with both fists. There was no time to think—only act. Using a bear hug, I just managed to restrain Tim. Tim had the added strength of anger. He struggled from my grip; turned around, and stared at me with the most inhuman expression I had ever witnessed. I had never seen Tim like this before. This wasn't my friend I was looking at. Time stood still. Tim didn't say a word. Our eyes locked for a moment or two. I walked over to a chair and sat down. Tim just stood there, motionless. I spoke first. I said, "You two can argue and fight all you want, but that doesn't mean I have to watch." I stood up, grabbed a couple of beers, and headed for the door. The way I was feeling, spending the night in my car didn't seem like such a bad idea.

I wasn't in the car more than a couple of minutes before I was startled by a knock at the passenger side window. It was Nancy. She said things had calmed down and that Tim wanted me to come back in. I told her no thanks; hell would freeze over before I was going back in. It occurred to me then just how angry I was.

Until the next morning, I didn't think I knew the true meaning of awkwardness. There was very little said among the three of us. I wasn't sure how they were feeling, but I felt angry as hell. Instead of coming down hard on Tim, I kept my thoughts private. Even after all that had happened, I decided to go ahead with what I thought was my obligation to Tim and his business.

After returning to West Palm, I continued to drive the escorts to their appointments. On the surface, Tim and I carried on as if nothing had happened. I knew just below the surface, both of us had grown weaker. I sensed Tim didn't trust me like he used to. Trust, to Tim, was the most important thing in his life. I would avoid Tim and Nancy, even though I knew it



Selection of Merit:
Wrenches
Thomas Becka



fed Tim's developing paranoia. Whenever I had free time I would spend it in my bedroom. The more Tim seemed to be losing it, the more guilty I felt. He was my best friend and I didn't know how to help. I credited Tim's erratic behavior to the alcohol and the memory of his brother's suicide.

When New Year's Even rolled around, I wasn't completely surprised when Tim let loose. In order to celebrate the new year, Tim thought it proper to empty several clips from his 9mm handguns. When the police showed up, Nancy answered the door. She admitted to hearing the shots, but not to where they originated. The police then proceeded to the next townhouse; we had lucked out, big time. I don't think Tim would have surrendered peacefully. Over the next several days, Tim seemed to become more and more suspicious. He would say the police were out to entrap him. After listening to a week of Tim's ranting and raving about entrapment, we closed down the escort business and moved to Tampa Bay. With the suddenness of the move, came a creeping dread. Tim's paranoia seemed to be catching.

Leaving West Palm Beach on the spur of the moment left us in a jam—as far as a place to stay was concerned. I knew asking to stay at Tim's parents was out of the question. We ended up in a run-down trailer park that rented by the week. I thought the situation couldn't get much worse. I found myself torn between loyalty to Tim and the realization that Tim could lose control at any time. Two days after moving into that run-down hovel of a trailer, things came to a head.

Tim, Nancy, and I were sitting in the largest room of that very small trailer. It was so depressing that all we felt like doing was getting wasted. The air-conditioner hardly worked at all. The place smelled like it hadn't been aired out in months. Tim had recently been keeping his Glock 9mm close at hand. I didn't think anything of it. My judgment was so distorted with booze and drugs that I didn't anticipate what was to come next.

For the first time since that night in the motel room, Tim displayed his true feelings about me and, to my surprise, Nancy. He had this sick, twisted idea that the only reason I had pulled him off Nancy was because I had a sexual attraction to her. He said a truly loyal friend would have kept his nose out of his and Nancy's relationship. He then proceeded to accuse Nancy and I of having an affair behind his back.

I couldn't take it any more. I felt I had no choice but to leave. I had barely risen from my chair, when I noticed out of the corner of my eye Tim's 9mm pointing directly at my head. I headed straight for the door. If he was going to shoot me, he would have to do it the coward's way—in the back. It sure wasn't bravery on my part. I really didn't think Tim could shoot a friend in the back.

For years afterward, I blamed myself for our falling out. I even let the guilt affect my other friendships. To me, I seemed like I was unworthy to be friends with anyone. Within a year of the falling out with Tim, I had drifted away from the rest of my friends.

Today my life and outlook on friendship are much healthier—nearly two years of sobriety doesn't hurt. I look back at my stay in Florida and regret all those years of blaming myself for the loss of Tim's friendship. In order to have a healthy friendship, a *blank check* of loyalty is never required. I'd like to think that even Tim understands this concept.

Alumni Poetry: Karen Galbraith

When I Was Young

When I was young...
I believed that dreams came true
I believed in Santa Claus
and wishing wells

When I was young...
the moon was made of cheese
the sun of dandelions
and stars were fireflies.

When I was young...
Pain could be healed with a kiss and a smile
Endless summer days numbered all too few
while short winter days lasted forever

When I was young...
I thought monsters were real
And, outside my window
fairies danced on crisp autumn nights

When I was young...
I couldn't wait to grow up
To make my own rules
To be my own person

Now that I am older...
There is not time for daydreams
no time for barefoot walks
nor for snowball fights

Now that I'm older...
I long for those carefree days
and the wishes I made
when I was young



Third Place:
Hands of Time
Jennifer Weymouth

- Essay: Selection of Merit
- Nicholas Laretz

An Insurrection Against Vivisection

Do you have children? If not, maybe you plan to have them in the future. If a child of yours were stricken with a serious illness, God forbid, would you do anything humanly possible to make things better? What if a child of yours or anyone close to you contracted the polio virus? Maybe you aren't old enough to remember when polio was the scourge to thousands. In the U.S. alone, 20,000 people a year were killed or handicapped for life before Drs. Jonas Salk and Albert Sabin discovered a treatment for the poliovirus (Blum 46). It is estimated that one to five million rhesus macaque monkeys made the ultimate sacrifice to help Sabin, Salk, and others with their life-saving discovery (Blum 46). Almost forty years have passed since this great discovery—no one is going to blame you for taking the polio vaccine or any other treatment for granted. You may even be one of those well-intentioned people who have drifted into one of the various animal rights groups.

Did you know that dozens of treatments have been discovered and continue to be discovered with the benefit of animal testing? During the past several decades many advancements have been made, such as, rubella vaccines and cornea transplant techniques during the sixties with the use of monkeys. Open-heart surgery was developed while experimenting on dogs. In the seventies and eighties, primate research helped track down tumor viruses (Blum 47). "Many researchers believe that, without primates, a vaccine against AIDS will never be developed" (47). If vivisection (an experimental operation on an animal) is called for and animals cannot be used, we are left with two alternatives: letting diseases run their course, or resorting to live human testing. As long as new diseases continue to arise, and until we find other means, animals must continue to be sacrificed on the altar of science.

According to W.H. Thorpe, author of Animal Nature and Human Nature: "There is a tremendous chasm—intellectual, artistic, technical, linguistic, moral, ethical, scientific, and spiritual—between ape and man" (Qtd in Fox 32). There are also many ways in which humans are biologically unique. For instance, as Richard M. Tullar states in The Human Species:

"We are bigger and stronger than most mammals. We can climb, swim, jump, kick, and throw. We can run faster than most mammals and can out walk any of them, including the horse. In all-round physical prowess, we rank high among the animals...We are fully erect, wholly terrestrial, and zealously protective of our territorial hunting ground and its home base. We are the most intelligent, hairless, sweaty, not to mention sexy, primate on earth." (Qtd. in Fox 36)

The combination of high intelligence, a moral capacity, and an ability to empathize, allows *Homo Sapiens* to stand apart. We are different from animals in kind, not just degree.

Some may wonder why should we not just target all animal experimentation at the lower forms of life, such as rats. After

all, monkeys and apes are so cute. We can't help but to compare monkeys and apes to humans. Rats will continue to be used in various forms of research, but they will never be a substitute for apes and monkeys. Take the case of the European catastrophe with the sleeping pill thalidomide. This particular drug was tested on rats and rabbits before the drug was released to the public. In hindsight, the researchers should have been more skeptical. Even though birthrates among the female rats was slightly lower, and the rabbits showed signs of slightly bowed legs, thalidomide was given the OK in Europe in 1959. Meanwhile, in the U.S. the FDA (Federal Drug Administration) debated approval because of a concern their scientists had with the difference between the metabolisms of humans, rats and rabbits. "Within two years, some 4,000 badly deformed children were born to European mothers" (Blum 47). In 1959 little was known about the transmissions of toxins from mother to fetus. Instead of giving birth to babies with normal ears, hands and feet, these mothers were treated to the horrible surprise of missing ears and flipper appendages. Sadly, this human tragedy could have been avoided if only this drug had been tested on primates before it was given to these unsuspecting mothers to be. In the midst of the controversy, researchers began to wonder if the metabolism of primates was different (Blum 47). After testing was completed with baboon test animals, researchers proved they could have prevented this unfortunate tragedy. The baboon offspring tested out with the same side effects as the human babies exhibited. In future testing researchers would be more careful when extrapolating their test results. This, of course was not comfort to the mothers of the 4,000 deformed babies.

"The Animal Liberation Front's activities comprise an important part of today's animal protection movement just as the Underground Railroad and the French Resistance did in earlier battles for social justice" (PETA Fact Sheets, par. No.1). Today, the animal rights group PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) is often portrayed in the media as a mainstream political advocacy group. What the mass media isn't telling the public is that PETA is a strong supporter of the tactics of ALF (Animal Liberation Front), a group that has gained a place on the FBI's terrorist list. Since 1982, the ALF has carried out an estimated 80 attacks on various research facilities—they leave PETA to publicize the action (Blum 115). Grand juries in several states have investigated a possible link between the two groups (Blum 115).

What if your family is healthy? Do you just pretend that fatal diseases inflict other families and not yours? Can you

■ Alumni Poetry:
■ Pamela Gemin

To the Doe Last Seen

Running up the South
Exit Ramp toward
Wal-Mart Plaza

Through rear view mirrors
you promise her
the worst is almost over;
fur bristling, ears prickling,
horns honking,
clack of her skittering hooves
on asphalt, delicate lungs
pumped full of diesel exhaust.

In her blown glass eyes
you read the history of prey,
whole chapters cut loose and let fly
over cloverleaf roads,
pages tearing the whizzing force
of arrows, bullets, engines.

She's already the star
of somebody's coffee room story.
By lunchtime
she will have been somebody's reason
to kiss and make up,
go back to church,
to reconsider everything;
somebody's chance to breathe deep,
let the last, best breath
of wildness run out in a whistle,
stroking the dented fender
or brushing the scrape
of blue paint from her tail.

And if you weren't already
late for work,
if you could take
just one wild ride again
you'd take it now,
in the wisps
of her velveteen ears,
be the whisper that tells her

Wait
Steady
Now
Go
Run

Alumni Poetry:
James McCulloch

Meat Market

At those public places,
The market opens,
And I can stand and inspect
A multitude of meat.

Vegetarian canons preach a pure diet,
Still, my mind cannot help
But shoplift a thought
Of satisfying these inner cravings.

My mouth waters at the leaner portion,
As seen in the Sunday circular,
And touted by a market
That demands the fat-free cut.

Now I, among my brothers, am eager
To buy and partake.
Some pay cash,
Others with their supposed "good credit."

And in the aroma and frenzy of the market,
Some will steal what was not offered.
And all who rush to fill their plate,
May find their arteries clogging.

Nonetheless, we continue to sit and stare
At every breast, leg, and thigh.
Will there be an end to our primal cravings
Promoted by the images of those public places?

look your neighbor in the eye and tell her she can't treat her sick child with medication that was obtained through animal testing? The animal rights activists would certainly deny your neighbor. These same animal rights groups would consider your neighbor to be anti-animal or *speciesist*.

When it comes to sacrificing animals for the sake of human beings, where do you draw the line? A religious sect in India known as the Jains, believes in sweeping the ground before them in order not to step on any insects (Fox 87). To do otherwise would be considered anti-insect. Believers in Jainism also wear masks over their noses and mouths in order not to inhale any microorganisms (Fox 87). Are the members of the ALF and the leadership of PETA as concerned about life as the Jains? When it comes to respect for life, it appears the ALF and PETA leadership didn't draw the line in the same

place as the Jains. If a believer in Jainism told an animal rights activist that he must sweep in front of his feet when walking down any sidewalk or street, would the animal rights activist say that would be ridiculous? Wouldn't it be just as ridiculous when the animal rights activists say all animal testing should end? Do the animal rights activists view the Jains' ideology as being impractical? Certainly most people think that the position of the ALF and PETA leadership as being impractical and anti-human. Do the Jains view American animal rights activists as being anti-insect? What about the earth's other living organisms? According to the logic of the ALF, PETA leadership and all vegetarians, aren't all living organisms, including plants, entitled to life—apparently not. When it comes down to the use of other life forms, where are you going to draw the line? Are you going to be a hypocrite like the animal rights activists, or are you going to be realistic and admit that human life is of utmost importance?

Have you ever heard an animal rights advocate equate Nazi experiments on human beings during the Holocaust with present day animal experimentation? Besides being an egregious insult to the victims, victims' families, and survivors of the Holocaust, is this comparison in line with the facts?

"Even more unsettling are the remarks of individuals who claim they would rather see humans used as research subjects than animals. This is exactly what Hitler's mentality dictated (Fox 158). M.H. Pappworth (author of Human Guinea Pigs: Experimentation on Man) had this to say about the dedicated vegetarian and author of the Holocaust, Adolph Hitler:

It is interesting to note, as recorded by the distinguished physician who was an important medical witness for the prosecution at the Nuremberg trial, that Hitler when he first assumed power issued an edict making all animal experiments illegal. But this he followed up by ordering the mass murder of inmates of mental hospitals. (Qtd. in Fox 158)

While there is no serious debate about whether or not test animals should receive humane treatment, there is, however, a debate over what constitutes humane treatment. Animal experimentation must only be used when the benefits to humans outweigh our concern for animals. Are we as a people going to allow our fellow human beings to suffer and die so we can get an emotional high from preventing animal testing? It is easy to feel morally superior when saving an animal from testing when you do not have a loved one who is suffering from an illness that could benefit from animal testing. Extremist in both the ALF and PETA leadership show no signs of giving their fellow humans the concern they express for animals.

Education about the benefits and needs for animal testing will win the day. Every year new diseases sprout up, and we can not as a people leave any stone unturned. Until science finds alternatives to animal testing, vivisection on animals will remain the only hope for hundreds of thousands of people to lead a happy and healthy life. Whether it's the believers of Jainism, the ALF, the PETA leadership, an avowed vegetarian, or a believer in the use of animals for scientific research, we all draw the line for life and death somewhere. The question is whether or not we are going to admit to ourselves that we all sacrifice other living organisms in order to survive, or are we going to be self-righteous hypocrites like the ALF and PETA leadership?

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- Short Story: First Place Tie
- Richard J. Colwell Award
- Rachel Ward

Murder Revised

Larry Smith stood at the blackboard in front of the class, lecturing about the notes he had written there at the beginning of the hour. Since I had already copied them down, my eyes drifted out the window, to the computer building. Any second now, Vinnie would come walking out, as he did every Tuesday and Thursday at eleven o'clock. He was so dreamy.

Mr. Smith began passing back the short stories we had turned in last week. I was anxious to get mine back. I *knew* I had a bestseller on my hands, or at least a first place entry for "Threads," the school anthology that was published every year.

As he called out the names of the various students in class, he made little comments about their work. I was dying with anticipation. I could not wait to hear his praise in front of the whole class.

"Ruby, here's yours. Great title! Dale, good imagery; I felt like I was right there with the S.W.A.T. team. Jake, I want an extra copy of this to keep in the staff bathroom if you don't mind!" On and on he went, until there were only a couple of people left. How would I be able to bask in the glory? Then I realized he did not want to make the other students feel bad. Once again reassured and confident, I nearly danced my way up to get my

masterpiece when my name was called. So elated was I that I almost missed the fact that Mr. Smith did not say anything about it, but instead, reminded the remaining students about next week's assignment. My heart stopped dead, for a minute, but I waved good-bye, and ventured out into the hall to read the praise that I was sure lay within.

Sitting down at one of the many tables at the end of the hall, I opened to the first page with bated breath. I nearly fainted when I saw the bright red "C-" at the top of the page. As I read the marginal comments, my blood began to boil. "What is the point here?" "Where is this headed?" "O.K., You can start anytime." Red ink marred my beautiful manuscript of which I had been so proud. I was ready to cry. The final insult came at the very bottom of the page: "Your writing definitely needs work. While your poems have great imagery, your fiction gets lost in the flowery prose you try to create moods with. I can see what you are trying to do, but it is not working. You probably have a real gem of a story here, but I could not find it. Try the exercises on page 174-176 of the textbook. Then, try rewriting and see what happens."



Selection of Merit:
Of Serpent & Swords
Larry Lonsby Jr.

How dare he! I was enraged, insulted, furious! What does he know anyway? I asked myself. "Those who can, do, and those who can't, teach" as the saying goes. Obviously, he can't write; that is why he is teaching a class. Stephen King he definitely isn't.

My internal ranting continued for a little while longer, but then an idea began to grab hold of me. If he did not like my story, then why don't I just create a new story, with Mr. Larry Smith as the leading character. No silly romances this time, either. It was time to try my hand at murder. A Cheshire cat grin spread across my face and I settled back in my seat. At the same time, Mr. Smith passed by the lounge area, and poked his head in. "Getting some ideas for your revision, Rae-Lynn?" he asked.

"Oh year, Mr. Smith, most definitely," I replied, disguising the malice in my voice. I wondered if he was able to detect my intentions. I hoped not. I wanted to take him by surprise.

"Great. When you get the revision done, bring it to me, and I'll go over it. If the necessary improvements are made, we'll see about raising that grade a bit, alright?"

Affecting a similarly nonchalant tone, I replied, "You got it, Mr. Smith." To myself I thought, "Boy, is he ever going to get it." I packed up my books and headed towards the library. If I was going to have an accurate and perfect murder, I had some research to do.

A week later, I strolled into class, heart pounding in an irregular rhythm that blended fear and aggressive confidence. I had everything all planned out. Nothing could go wrong.

I approached Larry Smith's desk and smiled sweetly. "Here you go, Mr. Smith. My revision is complete. I really got down deep, and I think I found the gold in this one. I can meet you in your office after class to discuss it, and a change in my grade, if that suits your schedule."

"Sounds great to me, Rae-Lynn. I look forward to reading it, and after class would be perfect. That is, after I go downstairs and get a fresh cup of coffee."

"Tell you what, Mr. Smith. Just to prove there are no hard feelings about the first criticism, I'll go get a coffee for you after class. That way, you will have time to sit and enjoy the new story. Two creams and one sugar, right?" With that, I smiled again, and sat down, my plan going full steam ahead.

My hands were shaking as I emptied the sugar packet into the steaming cup of coffee. I reached into my pocket and pulled out the small paper envelope that Vinnie had acquired for me. One thing I really admired about that guy, he never asked questions. Taking a deep breath to steady myself, I poured the contents of the envelope into the steaming coffee. Being careful not to spill it, I headed towards the English department offices.

Larry Smith was finishing the last page of the last story he would ever read as I walked into his office. As I handed him the steaming cup of coffee, I asked, "Well, what do you think? Did I find the gold?"

Mr. Smith took a deep drink of the coffee and said, "Rae-Lynn, here is your story. I love the ending!" Blinking away

the fog of my daydream, I stood up to claim my paper.
Emblazoned across the top was a bright red "A."

"I love the surprise ending," said Mr. Smith on my way out. "Keep up the good work. You'll be a great writer one day, as long as you keep at it."

I flashed him my Cheshire cat grin, and headed towards the lounge.

■ Alumni Poetry: Karen Galbraith

■ *Winter*

The earth is dead,
cold and colorless
buried beneath a shroud of white.
The reds and golds of Autumn
long since departed,
their ashes scattered by
brisk November breezes.

Naked trees shiver
outside my window.
Their limbs, glistening like glass,
reach toward heaven
for the warmth of the sun.
The orioles and wrens
have abandoned their homes
to search for life,
in the endless summers
of the southern hemisphere.
I long to hear the laughter,
see the smiling faces
of children chasing butterflies
bouncing balls, or skipping ropes.

I wish March's winds would come
breathing life into the land.
I pray for April's rain,
for her warm water to awaken the world.
The summer sun would soothe
the sadness, ease the hopelessness...

.....the hopelessness...
The earth is dead--cold and colorless,
buried beneath a shroud of white.....

Carry On

"All of the bags are here except number 22," Claudia yelled.

"Number twenty-two, that's my bag!" What am I going to do? My parents and I had gone to the trouble of making sure that I was fully prepared for my two week journey to an area only to be described as a picture out of a National Geographic magazine. I was going on a medical mission to one of the most remote areas, Los Pocayas, Guatemala. Twelve hours away from civilization! Even if my luggage was found no one in his or her right mind would attempt the dangerous road to Los Pocayas. I had no opportunity to buy any replacements because all of the stores in the airport had been closed for the day.

Why does this have to happen? I am the youngest member of the team; I don't deserve this! I cringed my teeth and thought, why me, why me? When I could not do anything else, I decided to go outside with the rest of them. As I walked out of the doors, I was surprised to see so many people on the team rummaging through their luggage:

These Christian people were setting aside items for me that they could get by without. I had begun gathering the items when I heard a voice calling to me. When I looked up, I gasped at what I was seeing. There in front of me was a native Guatemalan woman. She did not appear to be much older than myself. Swarmed by screaming children, she attempted to communicate with me once again. As she mumbled, I was immediately drawn to her. As my eyes shifted downward, I studied her dry callused feet. They were like sandpaper. The dress she wore was filthy. Her mouth had only a few rotten, black teeth. Once more, I attempted to try and understand what she was telling me. With a twinkle of hope in her eye she smiled and said, "Tienes leche para el bebe?" She wanted to know if I had milk for her baby. Unfortunately, I had to tell her no.

As her figure began to fade into the sunset, I felt as if I had been punched in the stomach. I could not believe the way I had been acting. I was complaining over some lost luggage. Members of the team were handing me things right and left. I was going to be OK. In just two weeks, I would be back to my "rich American life." As I thought about the woman again, I realized that I had more in my carry-on that this woman owned.

Relatively Sane

Sunlight streamed through the cracks in the blinds, spreading ribbons of light across my bed. I yawned, stretched and looked around the room. I was startled for a moment at my unfamiliar surrounding. I looked around for a clock but couldn't find one. I guessed the time to be around 7:30 a.m. I climbed out of bed and walked over to the desk. I picked up my journal and unwound the leather twine from the button closure. I opened it and stared for a moment at the clean, uncomplicated page. How different from my life, how unspoiled. Picking up the pen, I began to write.

March 11, 1992 (7:30 a.m.)

Yesterday I arrived here at Oak Hills Hospital. Steve and I dropped the kids off at his mom's and I kissed them good-bye. Zoe stood at the screen door and waved good-bye, tears streaming down her chubby cheeks. Nathan was being the perfect big brother, trying to comfort her. Watching me leave sent Zoe into a three year old's panic and she began to bang on the door and cry. Nathan and grandma tried to distract her but she would not be comforted. Her sobbing, little body being cradled by my husband's mother was the last memory I have of her.

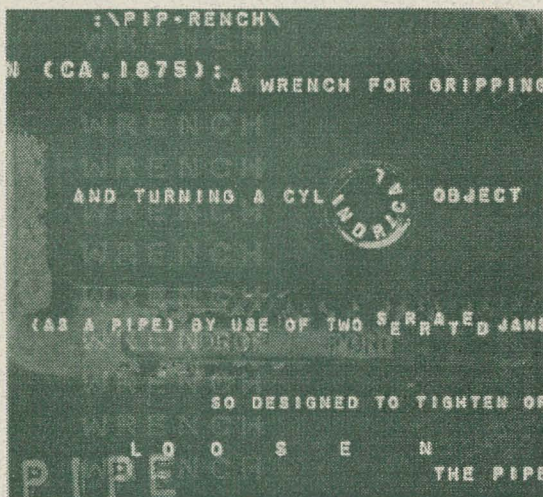
I sat stony, trying to swallow the fist in my throat. Then the first wave of grief shook me and I fell forward in the seat and poured my sorrow into my lap. Steve reached over and stroked my hair, awkwardly, like he'd forgotten how to touch me, then he pulled back. He told me that the kids would be

fine. His words didn't comfort me so I tried to soothe myself. I thought of what I had told the kids about my leaving for awhile, I wondered if they understood. I told them that I would be back home in four weeks. I hoped I was telling them the truth.

The drive with Steve seemed strange but maybe it wasn't. Maybe it was the typical drive couples experience when one of them is going to a mental hospital. He was hurt or angry, maybe both, I could feel the pain he refused to acknowledge sucking the air from the car, from us. During the three hour ride his straight ahead gaze didn't waver. His hands gripped the steering wheel. He was a man with a mission. Conversation was

minimal, the kind of small talk you have with a stranger in the check out line at the grocery store.

Finally, we pulled through the gates of the hospital grounds. Ancient white pines lined the drive and bent in the harsh wind. The scenery was appropriate for the day. Bleak, dismal, brown and gray. The only discernible color was the blur of veridian pines whizzing by my window.



Selection of Merit:
According To Webster
Keith A. Gardner

Steve parked the car and we went inside. There were skylights, plants and the sound of trickling water. Not what I had expected at all. Noticing my red-rimmed eyes, the woman behind the desk smiled, it was a soft, sad smile. She gave me a look of understanding tinged with pity. It felt like charity. I decided I didn't like her.

Together Steve and I filled out a mountain of paper work and insurance forms. He looked miserable. For a moment I felt sorry for him. I thought it must be hard to be held prisoner in your own body, to never let yourself feel anything, to not have the luxury of expressed emotions. But then, he's always told me that I feel too much. Maybe he's right. After all, he's home and I'm here.

Then a social worker gave us a tour of the facilities. Finally, she showed me to my room and asked me to open my suitcases. Steve and I looked at each other and shrugged. Mechanically, I opened my suitcase. The social worker, who at first, seemed more like the concierge at an upscale hotel, began to act like a prison matron as she rummaged through my stuff. I looked at Steve and he turned away, I could tell he felt ashamed for me or of me, I wasn't sure which. I watched as she pushed passed my clothes and found a small box of supplies I had brought with me. She opened the clasp and lifted the lid. She inspected the paints, pencils, pastels drawing paper, then set them aside. Next she picked up my make-up bag and removed my toothbrush, paste, shower gel, shaving cream and leg razor. When she found the leg razor, she held it up and with one eyebrow raised gave me a questioning look. She told me that I couldn't have it while I was here, I might try to hurt myself. I looked at Steve, neither of us spoke. Then he looked away. I knew in my heart he was jumping ship.

The distance between us, the depression, the suicidal thoughts, my decision to seek treatment, and now this final insult. It was too much for him to handle. He didn't understand any of it and didn't want to try. I think somehow he felt he might be blamed or held responsible for my misery. Looking at his face as he left yesterday, I knew I had lost him. *The strangest part was that I'm not even sure if--*

Suddenly startled, I set my pen down and turned toward the door where I had heard knocking. It was one of the ward nurses.

"Good morning," he said, smiling. "I was just checking to make sure you were up and around. Are you ready to go down and meet the group?"

"I will be as soon as I shower up. Do I have time?" I asked.

"Sure, just come on down in about twenty minutes and we'll get your first day over with."

"Okay, I'll be down in twenty," I said. He turned and left. I was feeling anxious again. I dreaded the thought of that first introduction. What would I say to them? Worse yet, what would they say to me? I didn't know what to expect. As much as I hated the stereotype, I secretly wondered how nuts everyone would be. The only thing I knew for sure was that I was determined not to become "one of the group."

■ Short Story: Selection of Merit
■ Melissa Grosso

The Quest for Daddy's Love

Returning home alone from work, feeling emotionally spent, as she entered the house she was immediately enveloped by profuse apologies. Amidst her husband's genuinely remorseful explanation and sincere request for forgiveness, she unexpectedly began to allow her mind unhindered access to memories not often visited, most of which were carefully buried. The reminiscences came sharply into focus almost instantaneously. To her surprise, the familiar sensation of inner numbness that had always previously occurred when she allowed her mind to traverse childhood recollections did not assert itself while listening to her husband's reconstruction of the evening's events. Instead, for the first time she was able to confront her ghosts without the interference of self-imposed guilt and contrition.

■
■
Alumni Poetry:
Kathleen
Byrne McConnell

The Evidence

It's here.
As I straighten the cover, tuck the ends in
And smooth the top to effect a chaste
presentation,
It's obvious, clear:
Your pillow encroaches upon my territory.

No wonder I felt a little cramped last night
And very warm.
And secure.
Loved.

Permitting her mind to drift back to childhood, she recalled the darkness, a comforting friend she had often used to her benefit. In the obscure shadows, behind the musty clothes hovering in the closet under the stairway in the clapboard house along the coast of Chesapeake Bay, as a little girl she would sit and wait. To pass the time, she often daydreamed about strolling along the beach with her daddy, searching among the flotsam and jetsam for shells, Indian arrowheads, and anything of value that the tide may have brought in with it. A sense of utter happiness befell her when thinking about the sight and sound of the waves rhythmically breaking on the beach, and she could almost feel the gentle spray of water on her face and hear the sound of seagulls gaily calling to one another. She always made her daddy so happy when she found something significant for him on their walks together, and once she even stumbled upon an old Indian pottery cup. At those times, when she could present to him one of her findings, she really felt

that her daddy must love her. He was always so full of praise at those particular moments that for a time she was able to forget her fear of him. The euphoric feeling was forever short-lived, for upon returning to the house, the calmness that had been evident only moments before was once again replaced by sarcasm and impatience. She always strove so hard to be good, to be a perfect daughter that he could be happy with and then maybe he would accept the fact that she was not the son he had always longed for.

Sitting in the blackness, her reveries of a life in which her father loved her unconditionally sustained her through the subsequent days. She truly believed that one day her father would realize what a special person she was, and how much she loved and idolized him. He would regret all the times he had yelled so ferociously at her, never stopping until she had broken down and cried. He seemed to take a perverse pleasure in being cruel. One day, there would be no more beatings; the belt would be used only as intended, as an accompaniment to his police uniform.

She never quite understood what she always managed to do that made him so angry all the time, but she was determined to discover what she was doing wrong and become a better daughter. All daddies loved their children, didn't they? Until then, she would try and stay out of his way so she did not do anything to provoke him. The closet provided solace. In the opacity she imagined herself loved and cherished by her father, always the sole goal striven for in her young life.

At least her mother loved her dearly, of that she was sure, even though her mother never interceded with her father's intolerable style of parenting. Even when the punishments were at their most painful, the most comfort her mother could offer was to stand soundlessly at a distance and weep, having learned long before that to interfere would only entail the same infliction upon herself. The incidents with her father were a subject that was never discussed with anyone; it was a way of life.

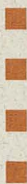
As the years slowly passed and her world gradually expanded, she often sought sanctuary in other nooks. At times the large oak tree abutting the beach became her refuge. The steady, constant breaking of the waves on the beach were soothing, as they were also the treasured rhythm that had lulled her to sleep at night her entire life. With the progression of the years however, her father only became angrier and quicker with his stinging belt and words. Her mind quickly scanned through a small portion of the multitude of occurrences throughout her childhood that her father had felt compelled to rectify with either physical punishments or horrific verbal rebukes, perpetually seeming to relish the role of bully. She recalled how she gradually stopped playing with other children and spent all her days by herself, although she could not remember at what exact point in her life this transition began. Friends became non-existent, as she felt far too awkward socially to allow herself a confidant. A friend might also learn the secrets that she had carefully concealed from the world. Emotions remained as always contained within, like a vice around her heart. She retreated inside herself, where it was safe, and never let anyone in, not even the young man she met who told her that he loved her and wanted to marry her. Even after marrying, she held a part of herself back.

Until tonight. Amid her husband's reconstruction of events leading up to the reason that he felt he owed her his sincere apology, she felt a strange sense of release, and of freedom. As she listened to her husband expound the evening's events, she could vividly envision the unfolding incident. She reassured her husband frequently that she understood his actions of responding in kind to the provoking of her father, and was able to picture the scene as her husband explained how he reacted after being pushed against the wall. She wondered how it felt to her father to suddenly realize that he was not the

one meting out the punishment; he was not the one in control over the situation, the one doing the hurting. The altercation did not come to blows, only to the point of her husband grabbing her father by the shoulders and releasing all his pent-up fury in words. She realized that she was supposed to feel at least a modicum of remorse on her father's behalf for the incident that had occurred, but the remorse was just not forthcoming. Instead, she felt oddly liberated; fear no longer controlled her life. With the darkness diminishing, a new beginning to her life was in the offering, unintentionally provided by her new and loving husband, and she was determined to grasp it with both hands.



Selection of Merit:
Tempting
Thomas L. Pynzewski



Reflections

I caught a glimpse of a woman, today
In a dark, lonely hall
And though her name I could not place,
Her face seemed so familiar.

Who was this woman,
Staring back at me
And what was this expression she wore?
Who are you? No reply.

Laugh lines beside her now frowning mouth
Told of happier times
When smiling came easily.

In her eyes, I saw the scars
etched by sorrow, fear and pain.
Had her life been so lonely
so filled with despair;
had her life been so much like mine?

Beside each sad eye, tiny lines,
like fingers, reached out to touch
the gray strands invading her chestnut hair.

Her forehead was deeply furrowed,
the wrinkles permanent now.
Perhaps, she worried too much
about things she could not change.

How had this woman spent each day?
Had she never stopped to hear a Robin's song;
nor gazed upon a starlit sky?
Had she spent her whole life
seeing only the tops of her shoes?

Did she ever take the time to watch
waves breaking upon the seashore
or, like me, was she unable to find the time
for such silly things?

Were today's accomplishments ever enough,
Or was tomorrow always on her mind?
Like me, was she always searching for more
Never taking the time to bask her glories?

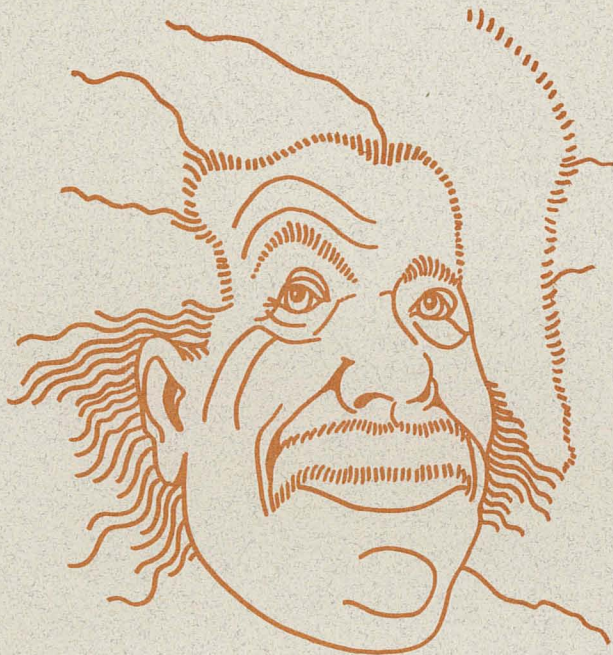
Who are you, I asked her
She gave no reply.
I moved closer;
Her face seemed a bit more clear

Who are you...no answer.
I edged closer still.
A bitter laugh escaped me
as I recognized
my own reflection.

- Essay: Selection of Merit
- Robin Cash-Larsen

In Praise of Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering

"The web of our life is of a mingled yarn,
good and ill together—" William Shakespeare
from All's Well That Ends Well.



Selection of Merit:
Mr. Einstein
M. Blanco

The 1990's have seen the emergence and exponential growth in the fields of Biotechnology and Genetics. Billions of dollars are being spent to research and sequence the human genome. The human genome consists of about three billion nucleotides found in the DNA of human chromosomes. Simply put it is the entire gene pool of the human race. This would include not just genes that code for physical appearance traits like eye and hair color and height, but those that cause disease or resistance to disease, as well as billion of other genetic combinations that make up all of the variation seen in the history of the world's population.

There is a world-wide project that is know as the Human Genome Project. Succinctly defined by Cecie Starr in the book,

Biology: Concepts and Applications, the human genome project is a global effort where "Researchers around the world are working their way through the 3.2 billion base pairs of the twenty-three pairs of human chromosomes...Some researchers focus on specific chromosomes, others are deciphering certain gene regions (loci) only." (212). This research is opening doors to a wealth of knowledge.

The sequencing of the base pairs has a projected finish date of 2005, a total time of fifteen years. Once finished, this research will provide with a huge data base that will enable them to go even further into gene therapy and genetic engineering. This technological research must continue to be encouraged and supported. The future of genetic engineering and gene therapy holds a multitude of possibilities for a wonderful new world with minimal disease and human suffering. Many discoveries have already been made with the information collected so far and gene therapy is progressing nicely through its infancy; its growth must continue.

In the Biology text, Starr goes on to say that "Of 2,000 or so genes studied so far, 400 have been linked to genetic disorders." (212). Geneticists have the specific loci on the chromosomes for these disorders. Huntington's, for example, is found on the tip of chromosome number four and one form of Alzheimer's is on chromosome number twenty-one.

Consider the hundreds of known genetic disorders that are becoming more clearly understood because of the Human Genome Project. These diseases could one day be eliminated from the gene pool or treated and cured right at birth through gene therapy.

Practically speaking, the cost of treating many of these diseases far exceeds most people's ability to pay for care, even if they have insurance coverage. The over-all costs to the economy now and future for treating these genetic disorders will be in the billions of dollars. Emotional and psychological costs should be factored in as well. Though emotional suffering is not easy to measure, it is not difficult for most people to imagine how devastating it would be to have someone they love afflicted with any one of these life-taking physical or psychological illnesses. If even only one disease could be eliminated, over time, it would have been worth the cost of the project.

The world-wide scope of the project should be a testament to all people as to what is possible to achieve when they put their differences aside and focus their attention on life giving endeavors. This global effort to study the human being on a molecular level by teams of people from nearly every part of the world is inspiring. It is what the human spirit is all about.

History has shown that with every great discovery, endeavor or invention, there has also been resistance, fear and ignorance by many of the people with regard to anything new or unfamiliar. People in history seem to follow this general pattern when presented with a new theory or invention: first, there is suspicion or fear (persecute or ridicule the thinker or inventor); secondly, a begrudged acceptance (loss of suspicion as ideas become familiar); then society experiences benefits from idea or invention; then finally, there's an understanding of the underlying principle behind that idea or invention. This process usually takes many years. The Human Genome Project and its related fields are no different. They are facing such objections and dealing with them every day.

Many people are concerned with the ethics of the project and with genetic engineering/therapies. A new branch of study called Bioethics has emerged and is tackling many of the issues as they arise. Many more opponents have irrational, fear-based objections and have not taken the time to educate themselves about the reality of the project.

Recently, an informal discussion panel of students at St. Clair County Community College shared their concerns and hopes along with possible benefits and costs of the project. About half of the students (Science majors) in the Biology class panel thought the project was a good idea, even with its 3.2 billion dollar price tag. That's about one dollar per base pair of nucleotides (Wills 76). The other half raised objections with the project. Several of the students thought that gene therapy and genetic engineering shouldn't be allowed because it isn't natural. Most of our medical treatments for common illnesses are not natural. How many of those students have taken antibiotics or been

- Alumni Poetry:
- Gina Tucker

Gentians

You are white
But I refract
Your colors.

I am not
Divisible by ten
Nor fission...prisms.

I give them to you so
You cannot steal
And absorb into black.

I make one last
Push for the sun
In the solstice

And I am blue.
You hoist my
Freedom and honor

Before your god
And in his name
On the gallows.

But for rum and
Trinkets I surrender
The colors to the flag

Of your glory.
Of your bravery.
Of my blood.

vaccinated for childhood illness? To object on this basis, that genetic engineering is not “natural” is contradictory. Genetic engineering could easily be considered to be a new form of pre-conceptual vaccination against genetic disorders.

Others from that same group protested on the grounds that God wouldn’t want people changing their genes, even if it’s for elimination of disease. Disease is supposed to be part of the human curse. Although bringing God into a scientific discussion group is questionable, suppose what they say is true. God exists and man was cursed. If genetic discoveries were not meant to be in God’s plan then He could have stopped it at any time by letting the knowledge elude man, like so much knowledge does (neutrinos, anti-matter). Withholding knowledge is not the restriction of free will, which God gave his creatures. God did not give man wings, but still he flew and civilization has largely benefited from that discovery.

A few other objectors fear world domination by “Hitleresque” clones. This Sci-Fi, Hollywood induced hysteria being applied to the genome project by some people is absurd, but will be addressed. Even with human cloning capabilities, it would be next to impossible to create an identically behaving Adolph Hitler. Replicating the exact make up of his genome would be the easy part. To end up with an individual with the same behaviors, who makes the same exact choices; the clone would have to be raised (nurtured) in every single, identical way. It would need every same experience that its master copy had to be totally the same beyond the genetic level.

If world domination was the goal, there are already thousands maybe millions of existing evil individuals who could join together to accomplish that goal. Cloning would be the most expensive and

difficult method. But for argument’s sake, suppose it happened. Would it be any more difficult for the countries of the world to unite against an army of Hitler clones than it is to unite against Saddam Hussein and his armies or any number of other future threats to world peace? It would be absurd to stop genetic engineering and technology because “if x then y,” when “y” is not a logical consequent of “x” as shown in the cloning example.

A majority of the students had objections to using genetic engineering to clone human organs for transplant operations. Scientists have succeeded in cloning frogs without heads, but with functioning organs. There is no brain, just a minimal nervous system. The process could eventually be done for humans. Such organ farm laboratories or futuristic biofarms could come into existence if the ban on human cloning were lifted. Many people object to this. But why? Instead of fearing the worst; imagine a future like this: The birth of a healthy genetic disorder-free infant. Medical technicians then take a

Poetry:
Selection of Merit
Amy Mino

My Hell

Sirens scream and torture my mind,
Promoting language of the vulgar kind.
My arms flail about as my body turns,
My peaceful mind assaulted as my temper burns.

All dreams are shattered by deafening blasts.
They’re ripped away just out of my grasps.
I whimper and whine in an angry groan,
“Get out of my mind, just leave me alone.”

This hell it returns day after day
Stealing and tormenting all bliss away.
Though I think violent thoughts, I do it no harm.
Each morning I curse it; that miserable alarm!

few cells from the body of that infant, with no harm to the baby, of course. Those cells would be contained at one of the futuristic biofarms now in existence. The genetic material would be taken from the nucleus of the cell. Then organs would be cloned from the DNA collected and contained in a suspension fluid until needed by that individual.

The baby grows into adolescence. At sixteen the child develops an *environmental* cancer of the liver. That child's own diseased liver could be removed and replaced by its own genetic duplicate from the biofarm. How different is this scenario from current methods used to get organs for transplant? They are both morally equivalent. In today's world, organs are "harvested" from brain dead donors. To object to a biofarm-cloned transplant, but not object to current donor programs is a contradiction. With the use of biofarms one person's gain wouldn't have to be someone else's loss. There would be less disease in future society. Therefore, there would be more money given to preventative care and alternative medicine methods like biofarms.

Other people worry that some individuals human rights could be violated because of genetic engineering. Some are concerned about discrimination of those with undesirable traits for disease, psychological disorders or lack of intelligence if everyone's genome is in a database somewhere. This problem exists now without the genome. So it's not possible for the genome to cause the existence of something that already exists. Discrimination is always in the news and as long as people are different it will always be in the news. Having the genome sequenced is one of the few ways man could ever do anything about improving his present condition.

Each genetic discovery or proposal will have to be evaluated individually, as it arises. There can be no blanket rules that cover every case because the field is too broad and complex. Many people rush ahead with pessimism, trying to anticipate disaster. All they are really doing is throwing out the proverbial baby with the bath water. Why not anticipate success? There are enough special interest groups in existence to keep the system in check, not to mention so many litigious members of society.

To halt genetic engineering and restrict biotechnology because of fear based "what ifs" that aren't logically sound would be a mistake of monumental proportions. When has turning away from knowledge ever resulted in a better way of life for anyone? Fear and ignorance are the enemies. To gain knowledge and avoid error should be the goal of all people. The insightful philosopher and psychologist, William James said, "He who refuses to embrace a unique opportunity loses the prize as surely as if he tried and failed." (Pojman 251). Turning away from the knowledge of the genome project is not a method for avoiding error. That act would be the error. To use the knowledge gained from the project without violating the human rights of another human being is the goal of biotechnology.

Socrates himself said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." (Pojman 2). The Human Genome Project is examining life at its most basic level. If a few people decide that mankind should turn their backs on genetic technology because they are afraid of the possibilities this knowledge could present, then they will be turning their backs on themselves and on humanity.

Genes are the basic molecular compounds of what makes people physically the way they are. If examining that part of themselves is frightening because of the differences and shortcomings inherent in all people, then mankind will never know how far they've come or how to progress to an even higher level of being.

Refusing to look and see what *is* will not make that thing cease to exist. This kind of thinking is equivalent to the Inquisitors who refused to look in Galileo's telescope. They too, were afraid of what they might see. Just as Galileo chose to open himself to Copernicus' radical vision when other chose to "not see" what was, society must look at what *is*. They should embrace this new method of increasing knowledge of themselves and collectively decide how to best elevate the state of humankind through the use of this amazing biotechnology known as genetic engineering.

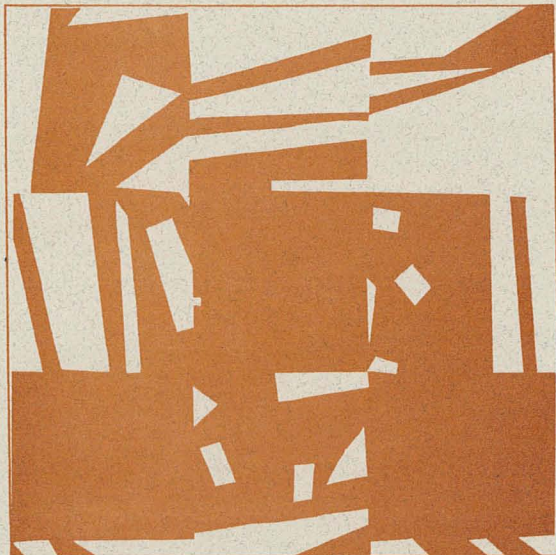
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Selection of Merit:
Down
Jeff Fair



Poetry: Selection of Merit
Janet Murphy

Decisions

I haven't the heart to let you go
I haven't the courage to stay
I got lost on the way to goodbye
And cannot find my way

It's hard to think of forever
When every word's a debate
Our fighting gets so out of hand
Love sometimes feels like hate

There are times you make me happy
Though lately they are few
And I think there's no one
in this world for me but you

Then "SLAM" from out of nowhere
You hurl a cruel remark
That strikes my self assurance
And leaves a permanent mark

I change my mind so often
Sometimes from day to day
Should I just give up and leave
Or work things out and stay

The only thing I know for sure
Is I can't go on this way
Yet — I haven't the heart to let you go
And I haven't the courage to stay

Alumni Poetry: C. Brett Johnson

Fishbowl

In his aqua-world,
my goldfish does not envy me
which makes me rethink...

I keep this sweater
old and faded, worn out collar
it still smells like You.

stepping on secrets -
my cat walks hypnotized;
attacks my brown shoes!

birdhouse in my Soul, I fly -
go outside; cold morning air
whispers a promise

The Homecoming

Nostalgia enveloped him as he glanced about the small town he had left as a boy. The desire to return had become almost an obsession as despair had increasingly taken over his waking moments. He slowed as he neared the remembered street and cautiously approached his childhood home.

The house was no longer painted light green. At some point during the twenty years since his family had sold it, someone had repainted it white—the color his mother had purposely avoided, claiming that white was too common and a little color would brighten up the neighborhood. The house and yard were also much smaller than he remembered, although the woods still stood, as well as the outbuildings and the cabins that his parents had rented out during the summer months.

Warm remembrances caressed his mind as he began to yearn for the carefree days of his youth, days spent lazily sitting on the dock watching the water or fishing, other times walking along the beach or playing in the woods. However, try as he might, he could not block out the sharp intrusions of the present day nightmare that now consumed his life, a situation he was desperately attempting to pretend wasn't happening.

Just this morning he had kissed his three-year-old adopted daughter good-bye forever after handing her over to her birth parents. The anguish he felt inside of himself was unbearable. Never again would he hold her sweet little body, brush her golden curls, or wake up to her precious kisses on his cheek as she snuggled between her parents. No more walks in the park, or watching in pride as she discovered the world around her, a protected world made safe for her by his wife and himself.

As he began to reminisce, he was dismayed to realize that all his priceless memories of his baby girl were now tragically tinged with an unrelenting, palpable pain. Each and every remembrance evoked a powerful aching want to turn back the pages of history so that he could once again experience the wonderful emotions associated with both the everyday, routine happenings and the milestones carefully, painstakingly recorded in her baby book. The giggling, cheerful request every morning for orange juice, her favorite cartoon show that they watched together every morning, the soft blankets, lovingly knitted by his wife, that she wrapped around her baby dolls during the daylight hours, the pride she exhibited upon mastering each new skill, the innocence that enveloped her, all were memories now stung.

It was incomprehensible to imagine walking into her bedroom again, to see her little clothes hanging in the closet, her new canopy bed they had purchased for her third birthday, her favorite books waiting to be read. Toys were scattered throughout the house, her little footprints probably still on the glass of the windows and door. Her faithful dog that forever followed her around like a shadow, sleeping beside her at night, never leaving. She was so much a part of their very being; their whole world revolved around their little girl.

He didn't understand how the God he had worshipped all his life, how the laws of the land he had obeyed all his life, could be so cruel. His faith was forever shattered as he tried to contemplate life without his angel. Having her taken from him was almost worse than her death, as she would still walk this earth, only without his loving guidance. She had become so much a part of him, living without her in his life was unimaginable. Her shrieking cries as he placed her in her birth mother's arms would forever haunt him. Her little arms remained outstretched as she was placed in the vehicle, and she continued to attempt to keep him in her sight as the car slowly pulled away. The pain was searing, and his heart felt as if it had been ripped from his chest. The thought of her birth parents now having total responsibility over his daughter's life was incomprehensible. They could never love her as much as he and his wife did; his love for her came from his very soul. They were so young themselves and, with other children to care for, they would never be able to give her the attention she deserved, the attention she was used to as an only child.

He parked the car alongside the road at the end of the long driveway, and began to walk towards the house through the woods. Although so many years had passed since he had moved, he still recognized certain trees, and the atmosphere somehow felt familiar. He wasn't quite sure how he had hoped returning to the home of his youth would possibly help calm his shattered mind and soul. He had just felt the need to return and had followed his instincts.

He stood at the edge of the wood and watched the new occupants of his boyhood home, his one-time refuge, go about their day. He wondered if they realized how lucky they were to be living in that particular house with all its special memories, going about their lives without the burdening hell he must now carry to his grave.

Their peals of laughter jolted him from his reveries. He reached into his pocket and withdrew his wallet, carefully opening it and gently holding her picture. She smiled back up at him, her pudgy little arms wrapped around her dog with her head resting on his neck and dressed in her favorite pink and white dress. She was so happy the day that picture was taken, and they had gone out for ice cream afterwards. He couldn't stop the tears anymore and they fell on the picture as he held it. The pain was intolerable.

He realized that he had made the right decision to return to the place of his birth. As he glanced around at the trees he had climbed in his youth, he raised the gun and fired, her picture fluttering to life next to him on the pine needles.

■ Alumni Poetry:
■ C. Brett Johnson

The 4th

A tree leans over
a pond; floating leaves and sticks
fallen from the tree

broken bottle:
scattered glass and kitchen tile
form a mosaic.

In July, fireworks
explode with outstretched arms
like my Mother's voice

tonight I cannot sleep
a dog barks in the distance
on a porch — Alone



Final Directive

As I stood by my father's bedside, I found comfort. He had raised his head for me to kiss him, as he always did, and squeezed my hand to let me know he was aware of my presence. He couldn't answer any of my questions, but I had given up on finding answers long before. Now I was the adult and he was the helpless child, totally dependent on me not only for his immediate care, but ultimately for the decision that would end or prolong his life.

The nursing home had called at 2:30 a.m. to tell me Casey wasn't doing well. Having been awakened from a strange dream, I had hoped the call was just a continuation of those things that your mind attempts to sort out in sleep. They told me that Casey had been refusing his medications and food all day, and had stopped responding verbally. I asked for specific information, and was told that his breathing was very rapid, his heart rate irregular, and his lab work showed abnormalities. As a nurse, I clicked into an emotionally distancing clinical mode, and mentally merged the information given with his known medical history during the twenty minute drive. I knew the prognosis wasn't good.

Casey left our family just before my fifth birthday. I attempted to find him through the years, unsuccessfully, and without familial support; my siblings were older, and had more unpleasant memories than I, so they had no desire to find him. There were questions to be answered, so the search became a quest. Finally finding Casey after 32 years, I realized that the father who raised me was my "real" dad, and the healing process began that would soon lay the child within to rest. That child had directed my decision making (poorly) my entire life, and through a process of forgiving, healing, and growing, I was finally able to put the childhood pain aside. Two of my three siblings still carried that pain, unwilling to forgive or forget, and my sister Nonie, who also forgave, was thousands of miles away. Once again, the baby sister was to carry this particular weight alone.

I had checked in at the nursing station before going to Casey's room. The lab work showed elevated BUN and creatinine (kidney failure), elevated Potassium (hence the cardiac arrhythmias), and a blood sugar five times the normal level. The nurse asked, before I saw my father, about his "code status." Were they to intubate or perform CPR? Did I want him hospitalized? Fortunately, several months before, I had written an extensive and detailed advance directive (and obtained my siblings' legally required signatures). Casey had been in a nursing home following a stroke, and was not always particularly lucid. The closest living relative my father had was his older brother, Ted, who was not medically trained,



and who had gratefully accepted my intercessions and explanations. I referred the staff to that final directive, which outlined, specifically and in great detail, what was to be done for Casey in a circumstance where he was unable to make his own informed decisions. I asked them to call Uncle Ted, and went to Casey's room.

He looked so small in that bed. Casey was only 5'6" in his youth, and a slight man at that. Here was an old man, maybe 75, who had suffered a right-brain stroke that left his left arm and leg contorted and atrophied. He tended to wander to one side of the bed due to a loss of the sense we all have of which side is up, so I always moved him back to the center when I visited (accompanied by a big hug, so he wouldn't easily notice that I was repositioning him). He always recognized me when I visited, first by my voice, and then by sight. Sometimes, the residual effects of the stroke affected his emotional state, dictating his moods, and he would not be receptive to a visit. He would say things like, "I'm tired. Get the hell out of here and come back another time. They locked me out last night, and I crashed my motorcycle into the building to get back in. Now they won't feed me. Don't come back unless you have hamburgers." I would kiss him on the top of his head—he always raised his head for a kiss as I arrived and when I left—and he would look at me with eyes that feared abandonment. He seemed to remember, though he never spoke of it, that he had left an innocent four year old child, never to return. He would say, each time I left, "You *are* coming back, though?" At times, he was witty and entertaining, telling funny (though occasionally crude) stories, and often terribly quick with a pun. Sometimes I stopped in after work, still in a nursing or paramedic uniform, and Casey would introduce me proudly to anyone who happened by. He never mentioned the two siblings who didn't want to see him, but we talked about my sister Nonie, now in Arizona, and he always asked about my two children, whose names he never forgot.

This last time, when I walked into his room, he lifted his head for me to kiss him, and squeezed my hand. He mumbled something unintelligible, and I reassured him that everything was going to be fine. Casey took a few drops of water through a straw; he had refused as much from the staff, but kindly allowed me to administer that small comfort. He was so dehydrated, and the rapid respirations had caused his tongue to be furrowed and dry. The effort was exhaustive, and he declined any further attempts to

- Poetry:
- Second Place Tie
- Linda Rowe

Snow Voices

Crystal flakes folding into drifts
muffle sounds of plows cutting,
pushing slashes in the white.

Snow balanced on twigs and branches
causes them to dip and drop across the trail
until occasional wind created miniature blizzards of snow puffs
allowing twigs and branches to spring up
with a silent snap.

Lazy snow falling aimlessly, back and forth,
back and forth in zigzag paths to the ground,
creates snow voices — wet drops against leaves dried for winter
or colder crackling snow under heavy boots.

drink again. I continued talking without thought of where the one-sided conversation was going, to let him hear my voice and know that I was with him.

Uncle Ted finally arrived, with Aunt Mae, and tried to talk to his brother. Casey mumbled something, and after a few minutes, Aunt Mae said we should go somewhere to discuss "the situation." In the lobby, we talked about Casey's condition, and I explained the advance directive to them. The nurse had paged the physician on call, the doctor and I discussed options and Casey's condition, and I explained to Uncle Ted that the best decision under the circumstances was to let Casey go. I resented having to be the one to decide to grant or withhold medical treatment, and wanted to hand over the gauntlet of responsibility to someone else to bear. I said nothing, but harbored a few moments of, "Why me, Lord?" then swallowed them back with the tears that I refused to let fall. I had to be the strong one, outwardly, even though I felt like jelly inside, finding the whole situation absolutely surreal. I wanted someone to rescue me from having to make life and death decisions. I told Ted and Mae I would honor their wishes, since they had spent an entire lifetime with Casey, but the cup was not to be passed. Ted and Mae left, and I went back into Casey's room with a cup of coffee and a book. I always had a book with me. That time it was one of Deepak Chopra's books, which I read to Casey for the next few hours. We had a wonderful (one way) discussion about spiritualism, and how the very moment we were in was as it should be because the universe was as it should be.

I talked to him about Kafka (explaining the hard parts), and laughed at myself for presenting something so foreign to a man of limited education who thought and dealt with things on a seemingly simplistic basis. I told him it was OK to rest, because I knew he was very tired, and the road and struggle had both been ever so long. I was reminded of the biblical imperative, "Be still, and know that I am God." I watched him closely, waiting for his breathing to ease and then stop. I took what vital signs I could obtain every half hour, dutifully recording them, as though it would make a difference, as if someone might need that information. I watched for his life to end, but he was insistent on hanging on. Several of the nursing home employees wandered through in those hours, to say good-bye in their own ways, taunting him to curse at them or tell them, as well, to "Get the hell out of my room and leave me alone." Funny how people find comfort in unpleasantness, just because it is familiar. He responded to no one at that point, not even me. He had stopped mumbling, no longer squeezed my hand, and only moved his eyes slightly in reply to my voice, if that was an intended response at all. Nurses wandered in offering me coffee and toast; I accepted the coffee, though I don't remember drinking it. It was a normal thing to do in a situation that one is never quite prepared for. What is the protocol? People can hang on for minutes, hours or days under these circumstances. No one truly knows when death will come.

I sat there next to his bed, waiting and watching, trying to imprint this image of the person who I had known for such a short time into my memory. I knew he was dying, but dying

was an end to things, and I really didn't have a chance to know if he would understand my good-bye. I didn't know if I was prepared for this part of my life to end. In that space between thoughts, I found strength. Freely I sat beside him, not out of obligation or duty, but love. I forgave, but had nothing to forgive. The connection between us was simply biological, but spiritual; the love was God's grace. It was not for me or anyone else to decide when the time was right or wrong, for there is no right or wrong. Things just *are*, and freedom lies in not judging.

I had to leave Casey for awhile. It was Sunday morning, and I was in the middle of hosting a two-day seminar on, of all things, stress management in critical situations. I was the only one who had the key to unlock the facility door, a picture that would present itself to me later for greater insight into the day. Only *I* had the key to unlock the door of understanding. I kissed Casey on top of the head, said "I love you, Daddy," and told him I would return. I held onto his right hand for a few moments, feeling the warmth of life still pulsating weakly through transparent flesh. "Good-bye, Daddy."

A memory flashed into my mind as I drove to the seminar location. When Casey had first suffered his stroke, I assisted hospital personnel with his daily care. He had said, at one embarrassing moment, "A daughter shouldn't see her father like this." That memory would explain why he held on until after I left his bedside, and would be his gift to me to fully understand what his death would teach me. To see an ending to his life would have negated or detained the message of the unending flow of energy, of life. He had me more in the last five years of his life than in the first five years of mine. From Casey, and from his death, I gained a gift of understanding, of adding another stepping stone to my path, to my spiritual walk. In life, though he gave me nothing, in death he gave me everything.

I learned that Sunday that the old explanation of an acorn dying to give life to an oak tree is a fallacy. The acorn doesn't die at all. It simply sheds its outer casing to allow for the transference of energy from the shell into the ground, and eventually into its new form: the tree. The tree bears the intelligence and experience of that acorn, the tree before it, and ultimately, the universe that bore them all. Nothing is lost, and the flow of life continues. The flow of love continues, and everything is as it should be.



■ Essay: Selection of Merit
■ Melissa Grosso

The Poor Relation

The Poor Relation, penned by Edwin Arlington Robinson, is a deeply thought provoking and probing poem. The underlying issues implied throughout this elegy, spawned as they are by the aging process, are eventually encountered by all, and do not acknowledge the boundaries of any particular era. While slowly and carefully perusing this exceptional poem, the image of my own grandmother in her final years formed the backdrop for my interpretation. I was able to conjure up her stricken image, her once keen mind and sympathetic nature horribly ravaged by the effects of Alzheimer's Disease. I felt great remorse for not spending more time with her while she was alive. At the time, I did not consider how the effect of my familiar presence may have brought at the very least a modicum of comfort to her, even if she was not able to acknowledge my presence. The social problems and issues of the aging as depicted by Robinson in *The Poor Relation*, as well as in *Mr. Flood's Party* and a host of his other writings, are very much relevant to today's age. Unfortunately, younger generations have often lacked patience and sympathy for the plight of the aging although it is a journey that we must all make one day, but this seems especially true with the current generation in the latter part of the 20th century. The tragic truth of our own mortality is a sinister situation we tend to avoid considering surrounded as we are by our many activities and high-tech equipment.

In the attempt to fit time into our very busy calendars to schedule a visit with our elders, we begin considering our visits a duty that must be endured. At the commencement, visits are accomplished voluntarily, frequently, and cheerfully. However, as time passes, visits begin to encumber our lives, hindering the alternative uses of our scarce free time. We tend to begin overlooking the fact that visits from loved ones are the force that keep the infirm and elderly in possession of hope and security. They await in ardent anticipation for visits from family and friends, oftentimes even eagerly greeting the strangers that cross their path in happenstance.

The subject of Robinson's poem spends her colorless days interminably waiting in anticipation for visitors. To pass the incessant hours of seclusion thrust upon her, she oftentimes journeys the well-trodden passageway of her rose-colored reminiscences of times long past. The memories of her youthful years help to keep her company

during the lonely hours she must tolerate, just as many elderly regress in thought patterns to the days of their own youth as they lose touch with reality. She also reflects upon those individuals that throughout her life have wished her ill will, who were resentful and envious of her natural-born beauty and of her gregarious nature, both of which aided in the



Selection of Merit:
Pieces of a
Shattered Soul
Jeff Fair

transcendence of her prestige among the gentry. However, she does not allow the judgments others made of her to cause her grief anymore, she is "No longer torn by what she knows / And sees within the eyes of others,..."

When night arrives and the subject is left alone once more with only her own thoughts for company, she naturally becomes apprehensive as she encounters the emotion of abandonment: "Her doubts are when the daylight goes..." Nevertheless, she feels herself a burden on the few who continue to occasionally and sincerely take an interest in her well-being, since "Her fears are for the few she bothers," not appreciating the fact that those who do visit remember her for sentimental reasons, those "who come for what she was..."

Amidst her reveries, the subject does not rail at the sacrifices and choices she made throughout her life that have culminated in her present predicament that she is now resigned to live. She realizes that she is just as alone in the world for having lived a Christian life as she may have been had she not, "Her wonder at what she has paid / For memories that have no stain, / For triumph born to be defeated." While she feels imprisoned and a burden, she is so very grateful for the sacrifice of time any visitor makes for her, as she forlornly fears the last days of her life being spent without the blessing of a visit from another caring soul. She thoroughly enjoys the reminiscing of shared experiences, although, sadly those sentimental times will never occur again.

Upon the departure of her exiguous visitors, she is left in silence once again, isolation creating the necessitation of staring out the window for any sliver of contact with the outside world. She compels herself not to cry at the departure of her guests as she does not desire the feeling of guilt to be the motivation behind an extended visit:

Her lip shakes when they go away,
And yet she would not have them stay;
She knows as well as anyone
That Pity, having played, soon tires.

She accepts the fact that the pleasant visit could possibly become strained and uncomfortable for all if continued beyond a reasonable time frame. She is left once more quite alone, with nobody to share the everyday, trivial, common occurrences.

The speaker's implied attitude toward the subject of this poem is one of resignation and futility. The subject's days are monotonous and she fills the void with the incorporation of her past with the stark, lonely present, yet the warm remembrances of her past contrast sharply with the cold sterility of her final years. And although the world is revolving and alive just outside her window, her room is suffocating. She lives an interminable existence, feeling abandoned, yet forgiving all who choose not to continue a relationship with her. She holds no hopes or illusions for what her short future may yet bring, as she anticipated only the relief brought about by Death.



The images conjured by the description of the subject's perceptions of the impact she has made, and continues to make, upon various acquaintances is alternately melancholy and self-effacing. Although she appears pensively sad while idealizing the happy occurrences her life held, she nonetheless does not wish to become a burden onto others even though visitors are her sole chance of vocalizing shared recollections:

...And she may smile when they remind her,
As heretofore, of what they know
Of roses that are still to blow
By ways where not so much as grass
Remains of what she sees behind her.

Robinson's poem brings probingly to the fore the verity that those still in the bloom of youth seldom take into consideration and that is the effect callous treatment has on the elderly; the elderly have so much love and wisdom to share yet are often not granted sufficient time to impart their beneficial knowledge. Could the aversion of comfortable encounters with our elder populace be a result of our own growing realization of what the future holds in store for ourselves? A future we try to cover up with excessive activity and electronic game playing? Once upon a time, our aged population were the same productive, competent adults that we are today, and in all probability were confronting the same issues now faced by one or two generations removed. The aspects of our declining years, that will be encountered by all, are so often safely placed in the far recesses of our minds, until brought brutally to the forefront when forced to accept the pragmatic elements of human existence.

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■ Alumni Poetry: Kathleen Byrne McConnell

*On Observing My Daughter's Newly-Pierced
Belly Button*

Smooth, sand dune swell
Tawny, taught, sugar-dusted.
Centered by a celestial crater.
Diving thumb print, rosette hollow,
Shrine to our first connection.

Violated now, cruelly altered,
Clutched by a stabbing circle of polished steel
And plastic,
Oozing, taunting above the sleek
With proprietary arrogance.

Your choice, true. But, your perfect middle
Made "better" by this trite bauble?
Perhaps so, even exotic, embellishing some foreign plane;
Not the temple of my whole life's nurturing energies
Since before you came to be.

The Hunt

I've always admired the pioneer women in the movies, who bravely took up their guns to defend the homestead from whatever dangers were threatening. I feel a sort of kinship with them when shooting clay pigeons off our dock with the hunters, practicing each fall. However, when it actually comes down to the kill, I pretty much bow out of the hunt. So, when my husband of four months asked me to go with him on the afternoon duck hunt, I wasn't keen on accepting. However, in honor of the women of yore, and not wanting him to think he had married a wimp, I said yes.

The late October sun hung low in the sky as we climbed into the boat. Our destination across the river sat in a sparsely inhabited island, a haven for wildlife. After humming over the gentle waves, the boat slowed, aiming for a small cove in the brush that would conceal the beached craft.

We set out, with Mike toting his Remington, and me, in charge of a large silver flashlight. As he trudged through the muck at a quick pace, I waddled behind, nervously exerting myself so I would not fall back into the emerging darkness.

After tromping across a quarter mile of brush and razor sharp reeds, we came upon a small pond that reflected the last dim beams from the sinking sun. Mike's pace slowed, then came to an abrupt stop. By now, I could see very little, but I was aware of a strange, flapping, whooshing sound overhead, followed by gentle splashing below. Adjusting my vision, I saw black silhouettes moving above, against the slate gray sky. Like a swarm of locusts, ducks were filing down in droves, landing on the water. They assembled themselves in orderly fashion for the night's repose.

For several minutes we stood frozen, listening to the seemingly endless wave of ducks echoing like dozens of whirling helicopter blades. As suddenly as it came in, the rustling quieted with several latecomers gingerly splattering onto the small spaces still left on the water. Motionless and blind, we listened to the sporadic, muffled, quacking as they settled in.

After a brief, absorbing pause, we silently withdrew from the sanctuary.

Although he had many chances, Mike never lifted his gun. He shared with me a part of his life I had never seen. I collected a beautiful memory and a deeper appreciation of the hunt.

The Drums of War

Suffocating! Damp. Warm. Back in the womb. Someone come— help me — find me! Small, very small. Very frightened. Locked in. The smell of dried mucous. Earthy smells. Small animal smells. Feathers, droppings all linger in panic somewhere inside. So small. Just wanting to hear the faint pecking. They too, hammering, let me out! Crying. Screaming. Clawing. Wet with my tears. Bawling. Sniveling. Pathetic. Death is not here. Momma will come. Pounding. “Momma!” “Momma!”

The rush of scented air. The tingling, surging, windless air so sweet. Greedy. Gasping. Diluting the thickness. Lungs tingling, singling with breath. Inflating. Clinging. Grabbing. Crying. Together on the barn floor. Mouth wet with crying. Still too new to feel relief. Rocking in her hold. Being soothed. Talked to. Kissed. Petted. “Nadie! Nadie! Are you all right? It’ll be okay sweetheart.” There together, bound. Want to burrow in. Be safe. Not think.

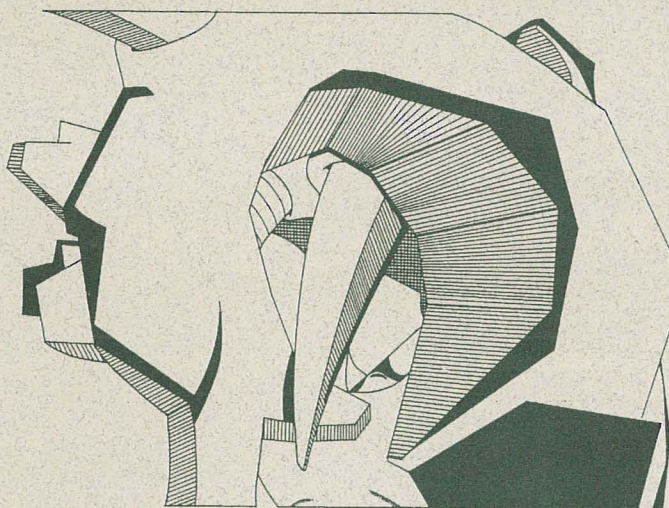
They watched closely after that, living there in the peaceful world of the small farm. What danger could it offer? Too many came to mind now with the stream out back and the highway so close. The false peace was shattered and they would always now be on guard, the two little females, the two older females drifting in a made-up world of peace. The men off to war.

It had been Bud’s idea. He told John to have Barbara and Caroline move out of their apartment and join Hillary and

Nadine at the farm. It was a good idea. There they could join together for strength while their men were away. They could help each other to keep the nightmares out of the shadows. It was necessary to keep busy, to fight their own war with loneliness and fear. They had done a superior job. It had worked well cleaning the stout farm house, washing the laundry and letting it dance on the lines out back, bathing their little girls together in the chipped tub, canning vegetables from the garden; not counting the

days nor the hours, having it all blend together like a lump of butter in a pot of cooking oatmeal, constantly stirring, stirring so as not to scorch it. Never let the spoon rest. Keep it in motion. Stir. Stir.

It’s an effort not to think when the mind wants to rush to that one thought, to bring the fear to consciousness. The numbness, heaviness of the head pausing in thoughtlessness.



Selection of Merit:
Cubilistic Cat Skull
Matt Schommer

The daily strain of the silent battle. Ignored. Not brought to light. If one admitted the fear it would devour, consume. The imagined faint thumping of war drums floating past the unlistening ears. The primitive, barbaric solution. They played in the night, never resting. Nudging. Pestering.

It had worked well keeping their hands busy and their minds in neutral. Stitching the quilts they had started, unaware that their fingers kept time with the distant rhythm. The spoil of each beautiful sunrise with the ever pulsing beat hidden from reality. Back there, tucked away safely. Locked in a private shell. Pretending lightness, cheerfulness so one finally believed. Then Nadine in the barn; that had shook minds loose of the needed pretending. It had dug up the buried fear and the drums had been heard.

The day moved slowly. The women drank coffee in the old kitchen and watched the steady movements of Mr. Feed with the hoe. His strong arms chopping at the earth as he disappeared and reappeared among the corn stalks that rustled in the dry afternoon. He had fixed the barn door and was now weeding the vegetable patch that somehow had crept to enormous size from their over enthusiasm.

It was neighborly of him to help. Perhaps Mrs. Feed felt she had to share her man. Ration him. They spent the better part of the morning fixing lunch in gratitude: crisp fried chicken, golden buttery corn on the cob, pecan pie.

"Why, he didn't eat a bite! Not one bite. Can you figure that?" asked Hillary.

"Maybe he wasn't feeling quite right. You know, with the sun and all. It makes some people woozy," said Barbara.

"Nah, nothing wrong with him. He was two-timing it with that little marching step of his. Has to get back to milk the cows," said Hillary.

Mr. Feed returned the garden tools to the shed and was heading their way. He seemed like something out of the past marching towards them, a strange old man hidden in overalls and a chest-length beard. He stopped to talk to the children as they played in the shade of the willow. The voices echoed back and forth, light as butterflies in the summer breeze.

It was pure comfort to see their girls isolated, free, untouched in their small world. The children were being silly and Mr. Feed walked up to the screen door sporting a full-faced grin.

The women stood arm in arm thanking him through the dusty screen, elbowing each other all the while, trying to stifle the giggles tickling their throats. Offered to have him in out of the sun for more iced tea.

"No thank you," he declined. "Got to get back to the Missus." Off he marched.

"Lord, not a tooth in his head! Not one!" Barbara shrieked. They tried to support each other, weak with forgotten laughter.

That laughter went so deep and felt so good that it was bound to touch something even deeper. There was no warning as the convulsive laughter turned into convulsive sobs. The battle fatigue stirred emotions too long hidden. They felt their lives shattered, broken, yanked apart, set in limbo.

There in the ruins of their battlefield they stood stunned, helpless, out of control. Every day since their husbands had left they had fought hard and now a moment of weakness had betrayed them.

"This won't do," said Hillary. They pulled themselves together, as best they could, yanked tight on the strings of their sanity that had been weakened by the stress of combat, and the day went on.

Another day began. The mourning doves cooing their melancholy tune. The world floating in the stillness of the country. The fields spread far with wild flowers scenting the air. The rooster strutting, crowing: the hens clucking nervously, wanly. The one milking cow, Bess, giving notice that she had to be milked. She too counted with the female population: there to serve, produce like the thirty hens.

Now each had to pretend for the other and hide the fear as each woke for daily battle. The girls shrieking with delight in the bedroom, rolling about in the bed covers still warm from the night's sleep. Bacon frying, something special from Mr. Feed. The eggs, fresh from the coop. The fresh biscuits and elderberry jam they had made last week. A feast. Let the festival begin.

A small thumping in their chests. The tempo increased. The pounding, loud pounding in their temples. The drums were beating frantically with the pace of their hearts. The drums were outside. Close. Present.

We are surrounded.

- Poetry: Selection of Merit
- Stacie Olshove

The Graceful Collapse

So, like I was saying before,
could you conceive having
one with him?
In the parking lot,
just by a collision of coincidences?

"Hi," he said.
His incisors were in flawless array.
"Hello," I said.

My blood pump was beating its way out of its prison.
Just from one word that he said.
We had a conversation in the parking lot
and I fell.

Essay: First Place
Amy Mino

Cigarette Smoking: A Worthwhile Cause

Cigarettes. The connotation that comes with the word is not a positive one. Actually, many people consider cigarette smoking to be offensive, and always have something bad to say about the habit. These people do not seem to comprehend the positive aspects of smoking. The fact of the matter is, that smoking cigarettes is well worth the risks and money involved.

One little-observed benefit of smoking cigarettes is the insight that it gives to children. Throughout grade school, middle school and even high school, young people are taught to believe that smoking is a bad and unhealthy habit. If adults did not smoke, these poor children would likely grow up believing what they learn in school is accurate and truthful. They would not realize that schools are sometimes wrong, and they would not learn to challenge authority or question common beliefs, which is a very important part of life. For example, if Marshall Applewhite, the leader of the 'Heaven's Gate' cult had not spoken out and challenged beliefs concerning where souls go after death, the cult members would have missed the spaceship hiding behind the Hale Bopp comet. These people's souls would have never made it to the great spaceship in the sky. If smokers didn't teach the children of today how imperative it is to challenge authority, there might never be another cult. Faced with that realization, what person concerned with the well being of children wouldn't spend a few dollars on a pack of cigarettes?

Smoking cigarettes for the sake of children is not the only public service that smokers take part in. The purchase of cigarettes is beneficial to the economy, and also sets a very good example for non-smokers. Most smokers inhale, at the very least, one pack of cigarettes a day. A pack of cigarettes costs about \$2.75, therefore, a person who smokes one pack a day spends \$19.25 a week, and \$1000 a year on cigarettes. No one will argue that \$1000 per year, per smoker, invested into

Alumni Poetry:
James McCulloch

Musings on Sour Words

Sometimes my words run the treadmill,
Spin the merry-go-round and round and round.
They roll forever down stale hospital hallways,
Where crackling fluorescent fixtures continue to die.

Where did I mean to go
When I sharpened my sword?
What did I expect to preserve
When my rudder steered the ship to disaster?

Melodies should be sweet
And invite young ladies to look down into the darkened orchard.
From the suitor, safe within night's cover,
A light must shine to match her glow.

Too much may kill the meadows.
How beautiful is a sunset on a brown horizon?
What is planted in the heart should be for one purpose,
To allow roses to grow.

the economy is bad, but the real contribution to society comes in the form of setting an example for non-smokers. If smokers spend \$1000 a year on cigarettes, that means that non-smokers have that much more money in their annual budgets. Non-smokers should realize this and find good causes on which to spend their extra income. Instead, non-smokers are probably just investing their money in personal savings accounts, food, clothing. Smokers are not, as some would say, "wasting their money on cigarettes," they are investing in the economy, and showing non-smokers that they are selfishly squandering their excess income.

Another commonly used argument against cigarette smoking is that it causes cancer. This may be true, but those people who preach against smoking fail to take into account that cancer has many not-often-considered benefits. One of the most exciting attributes of cancer, particularly throat cancer, is a procedure known as a tracheotomy. This is a hole put in one's throat which that person needs in order to breathe, because cancer has disabled the ordinary means used. An electronic device held up to the throat, called a voice box, is needed thereafter in order to speak. This may appear to be a very negative consequence of smoking, but in reality, it is a good thing. To begin with, the hole in the base of the throat is the perfect size to fit a cigarette in. The time that it takes for the smoke to travel from the lower throat to the lungs is significantly less than the time it takes to travel from the mouth to the lungs. Being able to get the nicotine more quickly is a definite benefit, but the voice box is an even better result of throat cancer. When people use the voice boxes, their voices sound very mechanical and computerized, making them ideal fast food employees. They could work the drive through window without any noticeable difference in voice inflection. Another benefit of having a voice box is the attraction of children towards the cartoon character sounding voice. Since the voice boxes make cancer patients sound like action heroes, the children will immediately be drawn to these people for entertainment. Voice boxes and tracheotomies are both very beneficial to people, and positive features of cigarette smoking.

By far, the best part of cigarette smoking is the opportunity to contract any type of cancer. The reason for this is chemotherapy, the most common treatment of cancer. The best part of chemotherapy is the loss of the patient's body hair. For men, the loss of hair is particularly beneficial this time of year. Halloween is quickly approaching, and chemotherapy would eliminate the need for skull caps in order to disguise themselves as bald people. Such characters as Elmer Fudd, Uncle Fester, Daddy Warbucks, Mr. Clean and Mr. Freeze would be nearly effortless to portray for a man receiving chemotherapy. For women, the loss of head hair might appear to be traumatic, but wigs are easy to purchase, and the benefits of chemotherapy far outweigh the baldness problem. For instance, a woman losing all of her body hair would not have to bother with such rituals as shaving, waxing, or plucking unwanted body hair. The time wasted on attempting to rid themselves of leg, armpit, and facial hair would be eliminated. What more could a woman ask for? Also, since chemotherapy causes people to vomit profusely, it would be a very effective weight loss plan. Obese people suffering from cancer would inevitably shed unwanted pounds. This would help their self-

esteems, as well as lowering the risk of heart attacks and strokes. Although chemotherapy may commonly be thought of as a motivation to not smoke cigarettes, it has some extremely beneficial uses.

In conclusion, cigarette smoking has been blamed for numerous awful things, but the majority of those things aren't bad at all. The influence on children and the money spent on cigarettes, along with chemotherapy, tracheotomies, and voice boxes are all overlooked positive results of smoking. It's just a matter of perception.

Poetry: Selection of Merit
Christine O'Connor

The Youngest

I am alone
In a quiet house
Where it used to be full
Of too many shoes and too many faces
Of too many voices
Trying to talk at once.

There is a boy
On my couch
Who was brought over
To fill up some space.
Even with his voice
I still hear the empty corners.
I turn on the television and the dishwasher.
I tickle him so he will laugh.
But,

He plays the guitar as he listens to me talk,
His face full of interest.
He respects my opinion,
He lets me finish sentences,
And damn it
I wish he wouldn't.

I am in the house where I should be a
Fixture
Talking to a boy who thinks I'm a
Person
And I wish he'd talk some more.

I am in the house where I was born
With a boy who
Does not know how very little
I have changed.

My sisters and brother are gone,
And my mom
Does not live
Here.

To Dare To Dream

"What do you do?" This question began to be an important part of conversation for almost any group of women in the late 1960's. Most often it came as a challenge, a dare to women like myself, to admit that, in the face of emerging feminists like Betty Friedan, Erica Jong and Gloria Steinem, we just didn't get it. We stubbornly continued to love what we had chosen to make of our lives, to be wives, mothers, homemakers, like our mothers before us. We were traitors to the oftentimes radical women's movement, not worth talking with, let alone listening to.

Never did I describe myself as "just a housewife," as so many of my breed tended to do at the time. I hated that awful denigrating word, housewife. Anyone who has done that difficult, but rewarding twenty-four hour-a-day job, often with a huge belly, a sick toddler, and very little money, is not "just" an anything. She is a dedicated continuation of a long line of women who make a place where a family can grow, laugh, cry, learn, play, pray, and become. She is a homemaker, and proud of it.

My mother taught me all the skills I would need to make a home of my own someday. It was every young girl's dream in that era. I was the oldest girl in a family of nine children. I did the family laundry by myself at the age of ten, when Mom was confined to bed after having yet another baby at home. She instructed me as she lay there, and made me feel both capable and important. Mom was a magician with a pound of hamburger, some elbow macaroni, a quart of her own home canned tomatoes and some imaginative seasonings. We never felt hungry when we left Mom's dinner table, no matter how skimpy it sometimes was during what is now called "the great depression." Love and laughter were the extra ingredients she always added to whatever else she had to put on our dinner table.

World War II began in 1941, when I was nine years old. Dad was in his 40's, and had too many children to fight, thank God. But he did go to school to learn how to operate machinery so he could help in the war effort. Food and gasoline were rationed, but, finally, Dad had steady work, making the best money he ever had. Mom and I stood in the long lines at our local A&P whenever we heard hard-to-get items, like sugar or beef, were coming in for those who had the ration stamps.

When the war ended, I was 13 years old, ready to start high school. That is when I began dreaming of going to college. Few girls went further than high school in those days, and those who did were said to be after their Mrs. Degree. The only jobs for female college graduates then were as a nurse, teacher or secretary. I took college preparatory classes, hoping to enter nursing school in a hospital in nearby Detroit. Upon graduation, I gathered all the particulars and tuition costs, and approached my father.

"Why should I spend the money?" he asked. "You'll only get married and have babies, and all that money will be wasted."

Mom didn't say much to that, but she encouraged me to take a job at the huge J.L. Hudson Co. Store in downtown Detroit. She said that if I wanted it bad enough, I would save the money to pay my own way through school. Mom's wisdom and quiet support has been my mainstay all through my life. In the spring of 1952, my new dreams evaporated, and an old dream began to come true. I had taken and passed my entrance exams for a Catholic hospital nursing school in Detroit. But before

I went for my interview with the Mother Superior, I got very sick. After running some tests, our family doctor told Mom that I had diabetes. I will never forget my Mom's words to me when I began to holler at God for the dirty trick he had played on me, feeling very sorry for myself.

"Pity stinks," she said, her brown eyes snapping. "And self pity stinks worst of all." And then, she changed the way she cooked for the family, to accommodate my diet and to show me all the good foods I could still eat. I give that wise lady all the credit for the fact that I do not, to this day, consider myself handicapped by my illness. Inconvenienced occasionally, but I am as healthy, happy and active as I would be without this little glitch that Mom helped me to accept because I couldn't change it.

But the Mother Superior at the nursing school was not cut from the same sturdy cloth. She told me that she couldn't accept a diabetic as a student nurse under any circumstances. She went on to warn me that I most likely wouldn't live very long anyway. And then she told me a really awful story of a fellow nun who had died very young, after going blind with my affliction. I wasn't frightened by her story, I was very angry, and determined to prove her wrong. The door to one dream slammed shut that day, but a window of another dream began to light my life.

That same summer, I fell in love with a young man that I had known since grade school. The Korean War was in full swing, and like most young men of that era, he was in uniform. Shortly before going overseas with the U.S. Air Force, he asked me if I would wait for him. I wanted to say yes, but I didn't know how much my diabetes would affect my ability to have children, something we had discussed and both wanted.

After he had gone, I had a long talk with my doctor, and he told me that, while it wouldn't be as easy for me as a "normal" woman, it was very possible. Great strides were being made in the medical field at the time, and more and



Selection of Merit:
Nike Wrench #2
Chad F. Raymond

We married in 1955, bought a small house with a G.I. loan, and had our first child, a girl, in 1958. I was living my childhood dream. I was a wife, mother, homemaker. I was happy and fulfilled, but my husband had to begin working on his dream to go to college so he could make a better living for our family. He began school when our daughter was two years old, and I was about to have our second child, a son this time. Talk about two very busy lives! Our third child, a girl, was born less than one year after her brother. I began wishing God had given me a third arm with that third child. I was living my father's prediction, and loving it!

Now he was ready to move out into the big world of business. I bought him a fedora hat and a leather briefcase and proudly sent him off to the big city each morning. I was immersed in child care, beginning scholars, housework, gardening and my beloved books. The children quickly learned not to bother Mom while she was off adventuring with James Michener, Thomas Costain or Elizabeth Goudge.

He then began exploring a new dream, to go out on his own, with his own office and clients of his choosing.

When we discussed our dreams, my husband asked if I would be willing to postpone my dream of living in the country while he actively pursued his. I knew that if I was patient, and he was persistent, both of us would have what we wanted, eventually. One year later, almost to the day, he landed a client big enough to carry us financially.

children began graduating from high school and college, and began to follow their own dreams. Three were soon gone from our country nest; one of them was married with a baby son. Our fourth child was in high school when I began to contemplate my rapidly emptying nest. I was not happy. It was time to look in my jewel box of dreams for a bright shiny new one. Or perhaps, I could polish an old, unfulfilled dream that I had never forgotten, and add it to the necklace of dreams that made my life.

"I'm bored," I told my husband one dreary winter day. "I can't imagine the next 20 or 30 years with nothing more to look forward to than swishing out toilets that don't need it. I'm better than that!"

"I agree," he said. "You are. What do you want to do?"

Remembering a long ago similar conversation with a very similar good man, I cautiously whispered, "I would like to go to college."

"Do it!" he said, with enthusiasm. "Go for it!"

And I did. I enrolled at St. Clair County Community College in the fall of 1980, more than 30 years after I had graduated from East Detroit High School. I was frightened that I wouldn't fit in or that I would fail miserably; instead college opened my mind, my eyes and my heart to a world I had only dreamed of for so many years. In the three years I was there, I made many new friends, and learned that I had a talent for writing that I never even suspected was there. For this, I give full credit to Mrs. Susanna Defever, my English professor, who was my mentor. She pushed, pulled and finally convinced me that I should write. That dream was her unselfish parting gift to me on graduation in 1984.

I got a job at a small local newspaper after graduation. A job that I still have, writing a weekly column, and any human interest stories that capture my imagination. The fascinating people I have been privileged to meet and interview are a bonus without price.

"What do you do?" If women still ask each other this question today, it is no longer confrontational. At age 65, proudly wearing my imaginary necklace of a lifetime of dreams realized, altered, or yet to be dreamed or implemented, my answer to this question would be very different than when I was a very young homemaker. Today, my life is much more flexible. Today, I can say, I dared to dream, and I am dreaming still.



My Birthday

It doesn't take a genius to know as he comes over to me that there aren't any words in any language to properly release his emotions. So there is no shock when instead of receiving an introduction I receive a fist in my eye. I try to block it, but with my alcohol-saturated reactions, I block thin air and fall onto his fist, making the contact of his punch harder than he could do on his own. Mind you, he is a well-built man, so he could do a lot of damage on his own. I vaguely wonder if I'll ever see out of that eye again. Blindness itself would be the least of punishment I could receive for this night of pleasure gone bad, but the movie that would forever be in front of my eyes would be among the worst punishments. At this moment that is what I fear most.



Loosestrifes

This is square
But I am.
Round as all that has

Not passed through your palm.
I am a millennium's reign
Of these fire gods.

Now flowing humble as
Rust between breakwalls
And sprout

Flaming Stamen
In bordered marshes
Among the rusty barb vine.

I thrive in these ditches
And in these trenches
Zoned for my reservation.

I seed and I rise
From my ditch reserve
And I spread.

You mow and trample
Me - the weed
And I grow.

And you mow.
And you die.
And I grow.

"It's my birthday. I only wanted a good time. I didn't mean to kill her."

"What is your name, sir?"

"I didn't mean to kill her. My friends treated me tonight. I don't normally drink at all. It's just that it's my birthday?"

"Sir, what is your name?" The question is becoming more of a demand than a request.

"The office threw me a party; I didn't plan on drinking, but they kept handing me drink after drink. I didn't mean to kill her. Honestly I didn't."

They give up and search me. When they find my wallet, they find the necessary information and arrest me.

They take me to the police station and attempt to take a police report or statement, whatever they call it, but they get as far with their questions as they did with my name. They look over my ID again and take as much information as they can from my cards. They ask me who I want to call and the only one I can think of wanting to call right now is that little girl. I want to explain, make her understand that I didn't mean it, and maybe get her to smile once more before letting her leave her family. They put me in a cell for the night, hoping that a night to dry out would help me think straighter.

Since I had nothing else to do, I do think, pretty straight too, I might add. Well, at least straight enough to decide that I won't let this mistake be in vain. I will make her death more than my lesson at her family's expense. I don't know how I will do it, but I will make her short life count for something. That is the only way I could live through the rest of my life seeing her body flung out of that car repeatedly and hearing her mother's screams in my ears every day and night. Instead of hiding from those torments, I will use them to drive me forward. Forward toward what I'm not quite sure yet, but only one decision at a time while I'm drunk, please.

Finally, the drink and sleep gang up on me and win. Except for the night replaying so much in my dreams, I sleep great. I must say one thing for alcohol, it doesn't matter what is going on in or around you, nothing will wake you up. Unfortunately, that is how many have died.

Later in the day, I plead guilty and receive a slap on the wrist for driving under the influence of alcohol, and another slap for manslaughter, although there aren't any charges of manslaughter against me. The judge just laughs at my insistence for pleading guilty for a charge I am not charged with. However, because I plead, he has to respond, so he just slaps my wrist.

This doesn't sit well with the family and I don't blame them. It doesn't sit well with me either, but there isn't anything I can do to fix it. Finally, it dawns on me, I am politically involved; I can work to make drunk driving rules and reactions tougher. I don't want anyone else to commit the horrible mistake I made. If most drinkers were asked if they are worried about killing someone else, they would say they are better drivers drunk than most people are sober or they'd say that would never happen to them. Well, I know differently; after all, I just did it.



■ Essay: Selection of Merit
■ Christine O'Connor

Inner Demons

I open my eyes, and even before I can smile at the sunlight on my pillow, it starts. My stomach twists into a monkey's fist and my mouth is suddenly very dry. I notice that it's only eight o'clock. I could sleep in today, but there's no use trying to sleep again. I leave my warm bed and step into the cold world. I put on my bathrobe and begin to be busy.

First, I do a load of laundry; separate the whites, measure the soap. Next, I wash the dishes that have been in the sink since last Saturday; soak the pots, dry the knives. Now I will dust my shelves, then maybe I'll shave my legs. I can't stop moving. If I stop keeping busy my mind will start thinking again. I will have to think about things I don't want to think about. I will have to see the pictures I don't want to see. I will have to remember.

I see the old one with tears in his eyes. I try to reach out and comfort him, but his eyes turn hard. I see the new one, no expression on his face, telling me he won't be coming around anymore.

It was a full moon last night. I suppose that makes sense. I decided, with the moon and all, that it was a good night for thinking. Hard. I tried to reach into my mind for the truth. I lit some candles and opened a bottle of tequila. I was ready to face my demons. I dared them to come out, but no demons showed up. All I could do was stare blankly into the flames.

Once, I thought I saw a demon, but it was just a scared little man crouching in a corner. I tried to get him to come talk to me, but he would only hide his eyes. I put a piece of cheesecake on the floor between him and me and waited for a while. He did not take the bait, so I forgot about him and went looking for some more obvious demons.

Next thing is me opening my eyes. I must've fallen asleep. How, I don't know. The candles have been blown out (the demons, I guess), and my bottle of liquid emotion is still almost full. I look towards the corner and see that the cheesecake has been eaten, but there is no sign of the cowering man. I curse myself for letting him get away. I'm sure he had a few good things to say. My obvious demons eluded me, but the little man came. Even though he hid his eyes, I'll bet he wanted to talk. I shouldn't have fallen asleep. I should've tried harder. I should've turned on some music and started dancing. Maybe he is a dancer and wouldn't have been able to resist. Maybe he would've danced. Shyly at first, in the corner. Then, as he got bolder and his moves got bigger, maybe he would've danced with me. We would've danced until we fell down. Then, I could've poured him a tumbler of tequila. We could drink and laugh. Then, as the candles got lower, he would look up and his eyes would be sad. He would make me listen while he told me his stories, and I would have to listen because now he would be my friend. He would cry and bury his head in my chest. I would hold him and I would cry, too. After he was done telling me, he would leave. He would tear out of my choking embrace and walk to his corner; I'd make sure he

took the cheesecake with him. He would walk to his corner and he would be gone. Maybe he'd leave through the front door, but I doubt it. He would leave me sitting on my couch, clothes torn, hair in knots. He would leave me there sniffing — no more tears left. Then, I would take a deep breath and close my eyes.

In the morning, when I'm cleaning candle wax off of my coffee table, I would forget about him. I would feel different inside, and I'd maybe be a little hung-over, but I would not remember. When I find the dessert plate, with only a few crumbs left, sitting in my corner, I will wonder. And, for a minute I will get a flash of his eyes, big and scared, but then it will go away. That will be the last of him. I will probably not see him again for a while, but at least he would know he had a friend. At least maybe he would feel more welcome next time. Maybe if I'm really nice when he comes again, he'll start visiting more often.

Oh, well. No sense dwelling on it. Now, I've got to fold some clothes and iron my pants. Maybe I'll call work and see if they need me today. Maybe I'll wash my bathtub.

Maybe...

Maybe next time I won't fall asleep.

Poetry: ■
Redman Poetry Award ■
Laura Tollefson

*E*vening Song

After my winter hibernation I was freed from snow bound glory. The sun finally felt warm on my face. I looked up to the sun with closed eyes and smiled, pleased. I could finally walk free where snows once laid hip high and animals burrowed their network of tunnels like a whole city underground. I found my feet had taken me to an old abandoned apple orchard in bloom. The trees looked natural in their unmanicured state. Their knobby branches sloped and pointed in all directions like outstretched arms. The delicate pink, white petals looked like jewels in the sun on a well dressed bride to be. The smell of freshly bloomed flowers titillated my senses. Everything was new, like a rebirth. As I walked through that delicious delicate afternoon a golden hue descended over the land as the sun sank over the horizon like a melting ice cream scoop or an egg drop. Dusk was occurring and I was present. Night settled it's dark wings over the fields and trees. Soon I realized I was not alone. With the impact of surround sound I was encased in tranquil music from nature. Crickets chirped their ancestral accolades. Scattering birds called in their young. Frogs croaked in ditches and ponds. Insects hummed, clapping their wings. Bats swooped hungrily through the moist air. The moon shone brightly and cast distorted but favorable shadows. All these things however great or small, play a part for the orchestral band at midnight. In the still of the night I stopped to quiet my soul to the lively world of evening.

Dominos of Applebee

There once was a town named Applebee. It was nestled in this small corner of the Rocky Mountains, somewhere in Idaho. No one really knows exactly the correct location but we are lead to believe it is somewhere next to Timbuktu, which is just west of Nowhere. In this town of 113 residents lies the starting point of a domino effect that would change our lives forever. It is also here that our story takes place.

The sun was tall and the town fire siren called twelve o'clock. Mrs. Not-so-generous was waiting for her daughter, Imashamed, to return home from her trip to Mr. Allen's grocery store. Imashamed was expected to arrive a few hours ago and her mother was starting to become concerned of her tardiness. See, Mrs. Not-go-generous was mayor of this little town and had called a meeting to discuss a list of books that the townspeople had become concerned about. They found the listed books to be a threat to their beliefs. Amongst the books listed were: The Holy Bible, Dr. Seuss' Green Eggs and Ham, Webster's Dictionary, and the Koran. Mrs. Not-so-generous knew she could have these books taken off the list if she could only persuade them with her famous chocolate chip cookies and cheesecake. But she was depending on her daughter to bring home the ingredients to make them.

What Mrs. Not-so-generous didn't know was that her daughter had been drinking that morning and was speeding around Watch-out Corner. The very corner which is known to take a few lives ever year. And yes, Imashamed became one of those few when she lost control of her mother's station wagon and drove off the cliff to a granite floor some hundred feet below.

Now you're wondering, why was she drinking that morning? Well, she had noticed she was late for her period by a few weeks, and concerned that she might be pregnant, purchased a "One Step" pregnancy test. She had taken it that morning and found the dreaded blue line, identifying her suspicion as true. Knowing she was pregnant and how this was going to affect her mother's job, she needed to have a nerve-calming drink of Jack Daniel's— well, in her case, the entire bottle.

An hour went by and Mrs. Not-so-generous became very concerned for her daughter and called the sheriff, only to find his deputy, Timothy Balls to answer. "Sorry, Mayor Not-so-generous, but he had to respond to a code black over at old Mrs. Falls."

"Huh!"

"Oh, that's what we named the regular call from Mrs. Falls, where we help her up from her bathroom floor, which she seems to fall on a lot."

"...Huh! Anyways, could you send an APB out or something?"

"Yes, ma'am. I can. And I'll head up a search party this very moment."

"Thanks, Balls." (Click)

Deputy Balls did send out an APB and searched for Imashamed for the next four hours, yet had nothing to report on. Imashamed had just seemed to vanish. Mayor No-so-generous still had no ingredients for her famous cookies and cake, and the meeting was to start in half an hour. With Mr. Allen's store closed and her food cabinets bare, she had no hopes to keep these books off the list. As the meeting came and went the Mayor was not surprised to see every book on the agenda voted to the list. However, this was only the first of the dominos to fall.

The next happened twenty years later when a young man named Orville Bombs mailed a package to the President of the United States. What was in the package was a bomb waiting to explode as the President would open it. He knew that they would run his package through

inspection, but Orville had been under apprenticeship of Ted Kazanske, and had learned how to disguise the package as a harmless carved birdhouse. What Orville didn't learn was that what he was doing was wrong, for he had no chance to read The Holy Bible or define the ethics given to him with the Webster's Dictionary.

The package did reach the President and did exactly what it was made to do and blew the President up. This was drastic because he was in the leading role of keeping Iraq within UN sanctions and in a state of peace. Without his hand in this, Iraq blew their own tops off and fired missiles in a shotgun type of array and just splattered nations within a hundred mile radius.

This lead countries like Iran, Egypt, and Israel to fire back. We all know that Egypt and Israel have no aim. They, in fact, have such bad aim of their missiles, they hit Italy and Sweden, who retaliated and fired back. Soon missiles were flying every which way and somebody hit Russia. We all know that the Russians have always wanted to fire off one of their nukes and it was no surprise that they would try to vaporize the U.S.

Luckily, the Russians missed and hit their Canadian friends, which gave them time enough to unload on Russia and Japan, just before they were annihilated. As this went on and on for some days, soon the world was all extinguished except for the little island of Brunei, whose citizens were unfortunately cannibals and had tastefully eaten themselves to extinction.

This leads us to the present where Ivan and Nikita, the two Russians in the space station Mir, sit. They have watched this whole spiel happen from space and realize what lies before them now. That is to breed and try to keep the human race alive. The thing is that Ivan is gay.



Selectin of Merit:
Can't You See the
Goldfish?
Keith A. Gardner

A Worn Path

Phoenix Jackson, the protagonist in Eudora Welty's short story, *A Worn Path*, is an extremely pertinacious old woman on a mission of mercy. She is described by the narrator in the third-person limited omniscient point of view as an old negro woman, very old and small, who sways as she walks. Her eyes are blue with age, her skin a pattern of numberless, branching wrinkles. (Welty 70).

Nature, the antagonist, is a force that balances equally with Phoenix Jackson. Due to her tenacity and resolve, Phoenix is able to overcome all but one of the adversities she encounters. Her trek along the Old Natches Trail into town is made with a single-minded purpose: the receipt of the lifesaving medicine for her grandson, her only living relative.

Phoenix travels the route to Natchez innumerable times, hence, a worn path. The terrain through which Phoenix travels traverses ever so slowly is etched in her memory. As she approaches each remembered obstacle along the way she good-naturedly, yet vigorously, prepares herself for the next challenge that is about to begin.

Phoenix is a worthy and respectful adversary of the antagonist. She values each of nature's qualities with a deferential regard. The thorny bush that catches her dress doesn't evoke anger at the bush, but an understanding that the thorny bush exists and is performing its function as God has intended. She praises the bush for doing its appointed job, all the while attempting to release her dress from the bush's thorns without permitting it to fray.

Phoenix appreciates the animals that surround her throughout her arduous journey as well. She realizes that she is trespassing through their natural domain, and only asks of them that they allow her passage through their territory unmolested and unimpeded. She talks to the animals as their equal throughout her walk.

Phoenix notices the beauty of the countryside surrounding her every facet of her journey, just as God intended nature to be enjoyed and cherished. Her observations of the scenery she is passing through, and of the wildlife she encounters, expresses her high sense of morality.

Her sense of humor is evident throughout this short story. She teases the thorny bush about mistaking it for a little *green* bush. The slice of her precarious time that she spends with the scarecrow in the cornfield as she explains, with a laugh, that she will dance with it is but another illustration of her humor. Her humor underscored the majority of the remarks she utters aloud during the extent of her travail.

Phoenix's courage is apparent not only in the undertaking of the difficult walk, but also by the fact that she does not allow the hunter she encounters to intimidate her. I believe that the hunter drops the nickel in the dirt on purpose, to test this poor, humble old negro woman with whom he has crossed paths. Upon his return from the folly of chasing off the big black dog, he notices that Phoenix has pocketed the nickel.

He lifts his gun and points it at Phoenix, reverting to a superior, pre-civil war mentality in which his implied accusation is disguised as a challenge. His attempt at dominating Phoenix is met by her straight, erect posture and the repudiation of his question. As Phoenix was a slave as a young girl, and freed at the Surrender, she shows tremendous self-possession in her response to the white hunter's menacing question.

Upon reaching her final destination, age, nature's ultimate weapon against the living, finally catches up to her indomitable spirit. She is quite unable, for a few moments, to remember why she came to town, or for what purpose. The journey exhausts Phoenix mentally as well as physically. However, the only cue she needs to bring her out of her reverie is the mention of her grandson. He is her sunshine, her present and her future. She is willing to swallow her pride and ask for charity as long as the end result will benefit her quest to relieve the suffering of her precious grandson.

Phoenix is willing to beg, or steal if need be, for the few cents she is able to obtain from various sources. Although Phoenix is exceedingly poor, her only thought regarding the spending of the few cents that she manages to accumulate is for the purpose of brightening what's left of her grandson's life. She decides to surprise her grandson and purchase the paper windmill that she espied on her way through town in the retrieval of the medicine.

Phoenix Jackson is an inspiration with her positive, confident, and respectful personality. She is goodness personified.

Works Cited

Welty, Eudora. "A Worn Path." *Literature: Reading Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and the Essay*. 2nd ed. Ed. Robert DiYanni. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990. 71-76

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Poetry: Selection of Merit
Rachel Ward

I see you as
a reflection
of myself.
Your face,
in my mind,
is perfect,
and your touch
whispers
through my heart,
yet,
I do not know you.
Your words are on my screen
as the night gives way to dawn,
and we speak for hours
in silence.
I have never met you,
but if I were given
just one chance
I don't know if I would want to.

Friends of the Arts

Friends of the Arts is an organization of citizens of our community who are interested in supporting the arts and promoting programs in the arts at St. Clair County Community College in music, theatre, creative writing and the visual arts.

With the retirement of Dean Patrick Bourke, the Board of Directors of the Friends of the Arts was reorganized and expanded. With the recent passing of Dean Bourke, the co-chairmanship, which he shared with Nancy Nyitray, will once again change. The Secretary-treasurer, Geri Reed: ex-officio, Christa Adams. Other board members are: Sylvia Bargiel, Susanna Defever, David Korff, Al Matthews and Margaret Stone.

We at the College deeply appreciate the support of our benefactors, sponsors, distinguished donors, patrons, and friends. If you believe in the importance of the College arts program and your name is not listed among the contributing Friends, we invite you to attend our events and to join with others in keeping Arts Alive in St. Clair County Community College.

For further information on Friends of the Arts, contact Nancy Nyitray or Geri Reed, SCCCC, 323 Erie Street, P.O. Box 5015, Port Huron, Michigan 48061-5015, phone 810/984-3881.

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